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CATHEDRAL

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CATHEDRAL

AND

UNIVERSITY SERMONS

BY

CHARLES PARSONS REICHEL, D.D., D.Lit.
BISHOP OF MEATH

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1891

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I

THE FALL

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of delight the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.—GEN. iii. 24.

THE history we have heard in the first lesson of this morning's service is one of the most singular, and at the same time most significantly instructive in the Bible. It is generally called the History of the Fall of Man, though Scripture never calls it so. Indeed, some persons have thought it ought rather to be called the History of the Rise of Man—of his ascent in the scale of creation. And in one sense this view is not incorrect. For before this transaction the two human beings who are presented to us as the founders of our race seem to have been much

in the same state as the beasts ; they felt no shame ; whereas their very first feeling when they had done the act, whatever it was, was one of shame, leading to the first attempt to difference themselves from the beasts around them. They made themselves aprons of fig-leaves, not for warmth but for concealment.

But this view, though partially correct, does not convey the whole truth. The rise from that state of perfect unconscious innocence which they shared with the animals that surrounded them, and which the animals still possess — for they have no consciousness of wrong-doing, no consciousness of sin— might have been attained in another way. They might have become moral agents without transgressing. And it was the Divine purpose, so far as we can understand the narrative, that they should do so. Had they kept the command of God, had they abstained from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we are to conclude, I think, that God would have revealed to them the knowledge of good without their acquiring the experience of evil as a set-off to it ; and then they would have shared in some degree the nature of Him to whom evil is so abhorrent that He is declared to be of purer eyes than even to behold iniquity, as if the glance of the

Deity annihilated evil; so that it was extirpated instantaneously by His mere presence. This is an altogether higher stage, not merely than the stage of brutish unconscious innocence, where there is no sin, because there is no consciousness of law nor of responsibility, but than the stage on which mankind now stand,—a stage of existence deeply conscious of moral good and evil, but in which that consciousness by no means involves the doing what is good.

We are not justified therefore in considering the so-called Fall of Man as a mere rise in the scale of being, a necessary step in his development. And this even irrespective of the sacred narrative, which leaves the stamp of disobedience, and therefore of guilt, on our progenitors. But what is most important to remark is this: that, supposing the whole narrative to be blotted out of Scripture altogether, as well as the two references to it in St. Paul's writings, which are the only distinct allusions made to it in the sacred books, the fact of which it gives a symbolical account would still remain. If we had never heard of the garden of delight, or of the tree of life, or of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we should still have to account for the patent fact that human beings display this most curious and

eminently unsatisfactory characteristic, differencing us from the inferior animals, that whilst we know—I speak in the general—the difference between moral good and moral evil, we so often choose the last, perfectly aware what it is; that we see and approve things excellent, as both the Christian apostle and the heathen poet say, and yet do the things which are not excellent; that there is a law within us working against the law of God, and preventing us from obeying it.

The system now so fashionable under the name of evolution, and which regards the human race as simply a development by natural forces and methods from some lower animal, of form now extinct and altogether missing, indeed, (this last fact being a weak point in the hypothesis), this system finds itself here confronted with a serious difficulty. No sense of sin or guilt, in the abstract, is perceivable in brutes. To express this in Scripture language, "They are naked and are not ashamed." They are utterly unconscious of any moral purpose, or of any feeling thereon dependent. Brutes that are tamed and accustomed to man may love their masters, or fear them, and act accordingly. But there is no element of morality in this, any more than there is

in the turning to the sun of certain flowers which benefit by his direct rays. Morality, as I understand the term, means reference to a law which is obeyed because it is felt to be just and right. Of any such feeling brutes betray no trace. Now this being so, if man be merely a development from some lost type of brute, whence do such feelings arise in his breast? and in the breast of no human being are they altogether wanting. Again, beasts fulfil their purpose perfectly, whatever their purpose be; and they fulfil it unchangingly. There is no difference between the structure of a honeycomb now and the structure of a honeycomb five thousand years ago. Whether bees gradually learned to store honey in waxen cells we cannot absolutely know, but if they did, they have ceased to advance; they make no attempt to vary the mode of doing it, or to do anything else. They have got their lesson by heart, and repeat it incessantly and unchangingly. But man is altogether different. He never fulfils his purpose, whatever his purpose be, to perfection. Not to speak of that highest purpose, the purpose of knowing, and therefore loving and serving God, of which only the higher specimens of the race can be said to be even approximately conscious; confining

ourselves to the lower purposes of providing for himself and his family in the best way ; of going through life not uselessly nor wretchedly ; of attaining some satisfying knowledge of things and men that will guide him on the whole aright,—we plainly see that these purposes, however limited, are very imperfectly fulfilled. For "God hath set the universe in man's heart";[1] and the immensity and variety of his relations with it, and of the possibilities therewith connected, puts all real limitation out of the question, and makes him dissatisfied with the present, no matter what he has attained. And this even in merely intellectual or prudential things. But when to this is superadded the feeling of responsibility, which is never fully acted on ; the secret consciousness that we are continually doing, or at least thinking, what is wrong ; the perpetual balancing between not merely *opposing* but *competing* modes of action, in deciding between which the time of action too frequently elapses ; all these things—and of these things human life literally consists, they are its staple,—all these things, I say, are so utterly out of the range of animal life, that one is puzzled to account for them if man be a mere stage in animal

[1] Eccles. iii. 11.

evolution. If we had not the history of the Fall we should be forced to frame some hypothesis to account for our present state, which is so strange when we reflect on it, familiar as it is.

Brought face to face with this difficulty, evolutionists of the purely naturalistic school have devised various ways of meeting it. Some deny that there is any such thing as free-will and free-action and consequent responsibility. This solution I myself heard suggested several years ago in an address on Animal Automatism given by Professor Huxley. In that address he led up to the conclusion that all our actions are merely automatic, purely mechanical, that we cannot help doing that which at each moment we do; and those who should presume to question a view which obviously makes morality nonsense, he beat down with the authority of St. Augustine and Calvin and many others, ending with Jonathan Edwards, who, as he alleged, argued that the all-overruling supremacy of God involves the inability of man to resist what He has decreed, and that therefore all our actions are simply the inevitable result of what theologians call predestination, or what scientists now call determinism. But the consciousness of each individual human being

that he is, at each moment, free to do or not to do the particular act which each moment brings before him,—this consciousness is too strong to be overpowered, whether by physiological or metaphysical or theological speculations. If *that* consciousness deceives us, we cannot be sure that we are not deceived by every other consciousness, and therefore all human knowledge must be resigned, and universal pyrrhonism must reign. The automatist and the Calvinist are equally refuted by that inner feeling whose revelations and suggestions are simply necessary to our existence. People cannot in the long run hold to theories which are inconsistent with the universal consciousness of man.

Another and cognate way of getting out of the difficulty is to deny the existence of *sin*. Sin is a bugbear, an unreality, a superstition which in due time will vanish before an enlarged knowledge of nature and of ourselves as part of nature. What we call sin is only a mistake, a falling short of what is aimed at or intended in each case, arising from not clearly seeing our proper functions in relation to the society in which the human animal finds the requisites for his satisfaction ; an imperfection in our incessant upward-striving, not a piece of guiltiness ;

and so the word, if it cannot be extirpated from language, ought to be explained away, as Spinosa explained remorse to be only disappointed expectation. We are bound each to do the best for himself; but as we get better informed, we find that we cannot do the best for ourselves except by doing the best for others; and at the worst sin is merely the violation of this rule through ignorance. And when once the race has been educated up to this rule, and it is clearly seen by all, sin will vanish, as being opposed to enlightened self-interest.

This, I take it, is Mr. Herbert Spencer's doctrine, and it is not quite so bad as the theories of Huxley and Calvin. But it ignores facts quite as much as they do. It supposes that enlightened self-interest can and will ultimately develop universal obedience to the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To put aside the patent fact that men constantly act in a manner quite inconsistent with their self-interest, even when they clearly perceive how self-interest dictates they should act, quite unreasonably in fact,—just ask yourselves, Is it possible that love should ever be evolved out of *self-interest*? Did a man ever yet *love* another because it was very much for his interest to do so?

Is not the bare statement of such an idea enough to cover it with ridicule and contempt? Love, as every one knows who knows what love is, love is not to be produced out of such materials. It is not to be manufactured, however gradually, out of selfishness. I suppose that some lurking consciousness of this absurdity has led the fautors of this hypothesis to invent the queer word "altruism," to denote devotion to others supposed to be thus generated,—a word coined out of Italian, because English and even Greek were incapable of furnishing an expression for the thought intended to be conveyed. When philosophers are driven to such shifts it is tantamount to a confession of defeat. We want no altruistic devotion to our fellows which is not really love but mere calculation of advantage. We want no such Italian refinements; such miserable substitutes for the clear, simple, sturdy morality which, thank God, has been hitherto the morality of the English race.

Another cognate objection to this theory of enlightened selfishness is that, whereas this theory supposes that an enlightened calculation of one's own greatest happiness is the basis of morality, the highest acts of morality, those which the consent of

mankind has agreed to call *heroic*, have been performed, not only without any such calculation, but in the teeth of it. The men who died for their country in past ages: the Spartans at Thermopylæ, the Romans at Lake Regillus, the Jews under the Maccabees, the Swiss at Morgarten, the English at Trafalgar and Waterloo, Gordon at Khartoum,—these men made no such calculation. Had they made it they never would have given their lives for their country. For no self-interest can go beyond one's own life, if this life be all, as these modern philosophers so cheerfully assure us. If there be no God to serve, no duty higher than self-interest to perform, it is all over with heroism; the age which has drunk in this doctrine will do nothing great. We may then read the history of the past with what I should conceive even the most enlightened of these physiological moralists must feel, an inner sense of humiliation; with the sense that these ignorant, half-savage, superstitious people of former days did, in consequence of their very ignorance, deeds to which our superior knowledge forbids us to aspire. We too, it seems, shall have *risen* in the scale of creation by *falling*. "When I was a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, I

spake as a child," says St. Paul. And so these philosophers may say, "We were children once, and then we thought heroic thoughts and did heroic deeds, but now, thank God, if such an imaginary expression be permissible, we are *men*; enlightened beyond anything so childish as heroism; and we do no more such deeds, which are indeed altogether inconsistent with our enlightened standard of morality." This is what England will come to (I speak of England as to Englishmen, knowing that all here are such by descent if not by locality of birth),—this is what England will come to if the materialistic unbelief, which has of late years become fashionable, shall gain the day against the old, foolish, fond traditions of the Bible.

Reverting then to the story of the first sin narrated in what is commonly called the account of the Fall of Man, I think it discloses to us the truth I shall now endeavour to express, and which seems necessary in order to explain the singular condition of the human race. It discloses to us that Man, in his first progenitors, was exposed to a probation, a trial, probably necessary to the moral maturity of every creature endowed with a moral faculty. This probation is of course symbolically described in the

3d of Genesis. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of life, the menace of death, the serpent, are all symbolic ; of the last, indeed, we are expressly told that he is the devil, the strange and awful antagonist of God, as the name Satan means —the power or person who, throughout creation possibly, resists the will of God. The prohibition to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil seems to mean that God forbade man's doing something, no matter what the act might be, so that man felt it was forbidden by one who had a right to forbid, the act itself in itself thus giving the knowledge of good and evil by introducing evil into action hitherto merely good, but also good unconsciously, good unmorally. Had that prohibition been obeyed, man's knowledge of good and evil would have been acquired in the same way as our Saviour's was, by *refusing* to comply with the temptation. It is often said by way of taunt against the Bible narrative, "What! sentence a man to death for eating an apple!" Just so, if he felt that the eating of the apple was contrary to the will of God. Of course, as I said before, this representation of the first sin is altogether symbolical. But, to compare Adam's temptation with our Lord's, have none of

you been ever inclined to think that there could have been no great harm in the suggestion that He should turn one of the stones that lay around Him into bread to keep Himself from famishing? Does not life seem worth preserving at such an easy and apparent unsinful cost? Might it not be His duty even so to do? Christ had but to put forth His power, and the thing was done in a moment, and who the worse for it? It is one of the most apparently innocent of all suggestions. But to do this would have swerved from His enterprise, and this our Saviour felt. He came absolutely to renounce Himself; to give up His life, if need were, for the good of man. Had He been allowed to perish in the wilderness it would but have anticipated by a few years the Cross. It was the law He set to Himself, *never* to exert His power on His *own* behalf. And therefore having fully realised the nature of His mission, and how He was to carry it out, He resigned Himself in the wilderness to death by starvation, if it should so please His Father, just as, three years afterwards, He resigned Himself to death by crucifixion.

Had Adam, the first man, obeyed his Creator as Christ, the second Adam, obeyed His heavenly

Father, he would, in the very act of resisting the devil, have obtained that knowledge of good and evil which he longed for, and he would have obtained it, as Christ obtained it, *without forfeiting his innocency*. And in all probability he would have transmitted to his posterity that higher nature which he would have thus acquired. For the partisans of evolution must not shrink from their own doctrines when they become inconvenient to them. They lay immense stress on what they call *heredity*, by which novel word they denote the transmission of qualities, physical and intellectual, by natural descent. And Scripture quite agrees with them upon this point. The doctrine that "we are shapen in iniquity, and that in sin did our mothers conceive us," the doctrine of transmitted inherited sinfulness, of original sin, in other words, is nothing but one particular case of heredity. Not sin itself is transmitted — that is nonsense; acts cannot be transmitted, nor can their guilt; every sinner sins for himself, and for his own acts of sin alone is he accountable. But the tendency to sin is clearly inheritable, just like any other quality of family and race. And, therefore, sin having once effected a lodgment in our race, it follows that the tendency towards it must transmit

itself in greater or less intensity to all its members.

And here let me remark how absolutely this doctrine of heredity corroborates the superhuman nature of our Lord. Had He been merely a man, born by natural descent of the old royal family of Judah, and brought up, as He was, in the seclusion of a petty Galilean village, at a mechanical employment, it is not merely inconceivable, it is *impossible*, that He should have developed the character we find ineffaceably impressed upon the Gospels. It is confessed by all that no such character is ever known to have appeared before, or has appeared since. His followers could never have invented or imagined it. Its absolutely unexampled nature stamps it as having been actual; for it is beyond fiction. But the doctrine of heredity is violated by it if Jesus were a mere man. Either then this doctrine is false or Jesus was more than man. He was the Son of man, the ideal Man, Man up to the highest potency of human nature; but this He could only be because He was more—because He was the Son of God.

I have treated the subject of the Fall quite apart from considerations bearing on the documents in which its history is contained. For whatever be the

ultimate conclusions at which the sifting criticism let loose on the Hebrew Scriptures may arrive, I think few persons of any judgment (unless they be absolute unbelievers) will refuse to recognise in the literature of the consecrated nation evident tokens of that Divine guidance to which must surely be ascribed the gradual development, under very peculiar difficulties, of lofty conceptions of the Divine in the bosom of the nation. Here we have a race insignificant in numbers, distinguished by no high culture, planted by conquest in a border land like Palestine, on the verge of mighty states,—states advanced in letters and in arts, and addicted to the most attractive forms of worship, the sensual or æsthetic and the symbolical; and yet we find this race conceiving and working out an idea of the Divine unity and holiness and providence exactly opposite to those conceptions which formed the staple of the religion of their powerful and highly cultivated neighbours. Those on whom this spectacle does not impress irresistibly the conviction of Divine aid and guidance history can teach no lesson. The literature of such a nation we may well accept, as embodying those higher principles which give supreme importance to the nation in which it

originated, and whose deepest convictions it expresses, without troubling ourselves respecting the exact sources of some of its parts. Its very affinity to the remains of some of the surrounding nations serves only to mark its immense superiority. It may well, in its more ancient parts, be an uncorrupted phase of a common and most venerable divine revelation.

If we ask what is the practical outcome of the story of the Fall, or of the doctrine of transmitted sinfulness, commonly called original sin, I think one great practical result of it, strange as it may sound, is ENCOURAGEMENT.

I take it for granted that every soul here present is conscious of being occasionally guilty of acts which he feels are wrong. Sin is universal. Now, if our race be really without any predisposing cause towards sin, how is this universal sinfulness to be accounted for? And what a frightful thing it is to think that, absolutely without cause, each human being becomes more or less guilty in the sight of God during his life, be it long or short, unless, indeed, it end before it is well begun, in mere infancy! The doctrine of those who will not hear of hereditary sinfulness is to me one of the most

terrible of all conceptions. Our race, then, without any predisposing cause, has been so constituted by the Creator that, except Christ, no one member of it can be pointed out as having gone with absolute innocence through life! What a conception! How strange! how fearful! But if we believe, as the Bible certainly seems to teach, that there is a certain taint running through our race, which is yet no part of its true nature,—that the soul is not exactly the sheet of blank paper on which may be inscribed whatever characters experience shall set down, but is already in some way blurred to begin with,—then the idea of the general, or rather the universal, sinfulness of man loses much of its inexplicability, and consequently much of its horror. We are indeed in that case guilty, each one of us, but not by any means so guilty as we should be did we sin gratuitously, with no predisposition to it in our blood. Our strange weakness, and still more strange perverseness, our proneness to go wrong, is not altogether our own individual fault. An inherited transmitted tendency palliates sin, though it does not excuse it; it is a plea for merciful judgment —a suggestion, too, of possible retrieval. And so the doctrine of original sin, or more properly,

original sinfulness, far from being the degrading bugbear it is often represented, is in reality fraught with comfort. The inner bias is a thing we cannot help; and we feel instinctively that God will not forget it. For "he understandeth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." But it may serve to hearten us also in another way.

If we feel drawn towards what is good, if we feel a deep inner approbation of things really excellent, we may be sure that this proves that we are not abandoned, helpless, to the overwhelming propensions of our inherited degradation. For it proves that, however far gone from original righteousness, or rather innocence, the image of God is not effaced within us. And if this be so, we may be sure that nothing can efface it short of our own deliberate determination to do so. Is there one here who would really wish to do so? to remake himself in the likeness of Satan? I cannot think it, though some sins there are which go near that most awful wish. But here, in this church, corrupt as we all are, and thoughtless as we too generally are, I cannot fancy there is one who would deliberately say, "Evil, be thou my good!" So long as

we do not say this in thought or act, we are not beyond the reach of that wonderful mercy and lovingkindness which stands at the door of each heart and knocks. Let us not refuse entrance to that heavenly visitor!

II

THE RESURRECTION

The Lord is risen indeed.—LUKE xxiv. 34.

IN certain Eastern countries there exists a custom which I cannot but think is very beautiful, and might well be imitated. On the morning of Easter Sunday every one, as he meets a friend or acquaintance, salutes him with the words, "The Lord is risen;" and the person thus accosted returns the cheerful watchword, "He is risen indeed!" I think it would be well for us if we realised our Saviour's Resurrection with something of the same vividness, if to us it thus entered into the domain of secular life, instead of being a matter of mere ecclesiastical celebration. For on it, if we are to believe St. Paul, depend all our hopes for any other state than that in which we now move; and if this present

life cannot content us within its present limits, it is to the Resurrection of Christ that we must look for something beyond it and better.

Let us then consider our Lord's Resurrection *in itself* and *in its results.*

And considering it *in itself* we have to look at the *fact*, and at the *proofs* of the fact.

The *fact* is, that our Saviour rose from the dead with a body which not only did not die again, but which was also not liable to death. This is what St. Paul means when he says, in the words of our Easter anthem, "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more: *death hath no more dominion over him.*"

This fact must be clearly grasped if we want to understand the importance of this and every Sunday's celebration. Christ's Resurrection was not merely the revival and renewal of this present life; it is the beginning of an altogether new life, the first term of a new series, of a new order of existence.

And hence the difference between the proof of it and the proof of any other resurrection; for instance, that of Lazarus. Lazarus and all the other persons whom Christ or His Apostles raised from the dead during their ministry on earth were seen at the

moment of their resurrection and afterwards, indiscriminately by all who might happen to be in their way. They were on the same footing of existence as everybody else, and were therefore shown indifferently to all alike. But our Saviour's case was completely different. He was raised not to the life we now enjoy, or endure, whichever term be the fittest; He was raised to the life we hope to enjoy in the coming world, and therefore could be shown only to those in whom that future life was already present in its germ. "He was shown," says St. Peter, "not to all the people, but to witnesses, chosen before of God; even to us," His apostles and disciples, "who did eat and drink with him after his resurrection."

This reserve of evidence ought not to create suspicion. It is only one instance out of thousands of the operation of a general law. Throughout creation things, unless they are in some way related, have no action on each other. No sense but that of sight is cognisant of light. The vibrations of that strange substance, for which there is no really discriminative name, and which resembles nothing else in nature, are undetectable so far as light is produced by them, save to the eye. Again, the magnet acts perceptibly only on iron and two other metals;

silver and gold, tin, copper, platinum, are dead to its power. The same analogy pervades the higher world, the world of mind and spirit. The clown sees no beauty in Milton or Shakespeare; the infidel perceives no fittingness in Christianity; the rebels who had put their King to death by alien hands because He was too spiritual for them were not fit—probably they were not capable—of seeing Him in His spiritual and immortal body. Even His own loving, sorrowing, heartbroken disciples were sometimes blind for a time to His personality; "their eyes were holden," we are told; and at all times, apparently, they were under a mysterious awe, which quenched familiarity when they beheld Him. But this does not in the least impeach the reality of His repeated appearances to them; there was nothing else which they could have mistaken for Him; they were completely convinced, and not only *convinced*, but what is much more, they were *converted*; their whole character was changed by the mighty influence of those appearances; whilst the withholding of all such appearances from the gross and carnal and wicked multitude who had just insisted on His crucifixion is exactly of the same nature as the absence of ocular evidence to the

blind, of auricular evidence to the deaf. The proof of His Resurrection, of His living again, only with a far higher kind of life than formerly,—the proof of this fact afforded to His apostles and disciples must have been overwhelming when we reflect on the change it wrought in them, and the wonders it enabled them to do. From trembling cowards, from stunned, broken-hearted mourners, it transformed them in a moment into heroes of the faith, into triumphant heralds of the most joyful tidings the world has ever heard. "Their sorrow was turned into joy, and their joy was full." No event in history is more absolutely certain than this, that they firmly believed that they had seen and conversed with their Lord alive after death, and that not once but repeatedly; and this unquestionable conviction implies that His Resurrection was an actual fact, since nothing short of its being real and actual could produce such a conviction in the teeth of all their previous prepossessions, in spite of their complete discouragement.

I do not dwell on the spiritual aids granted them in consequence of His Resurrection, though they make the matter still more decisive. For if they really were assisted by "power from on high," this

certainly carries with it the truth of what that power enabled them to proclaim with such astounding results, since it is impossible to imagine that God would directly aid them to disseminate a falsehood.

We have thus every reason to believe the reality of our Saviour's Resurrection that we have to believe any other established fact in history. For such facts we can only know now on the testimony of those who witnessed them, or on that of monuments and memorials of them, or institutions founded in consequence of them; and such testimony we have in the uncontradicted, consentient, unanimous witness of all the apostles, and of hundreds besides them who, though believers, were not apostles; whilst in every recurring Lord's Day, and not in the festival of Easter only, we have a monument and memorial of the fact which is absolutely universal, conterminous now with the globe itself. For the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, was adopted from the apostles' time, and has been kept ever since in memory of nothing else than the Resurrection of the Redeemer. It is the weekly feast of the Resurrection, the weekly proclamation of that one stupendous fact.

Let me now call your attention to another aspect of our Saviour's Resurrection.

St. Paul's reasoning seems distinctly to imply that the body in which Christ appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection was what he calls the *spiritual* body. For he tells us that we are to be raised "in the likeness of His resurrection"; and he also tells us that we are to be raised with spiritual bodies. If our bodies, then, on our resurrection are to be in the likeness of His, the body in which He rose must have been a spiritual body. Now if this were so, it not only goes far to explain why He was not displayed openly to all the people after He rose from the dead, but it does away with the strangeness which, on any other supposition, attaches to His appearances.

The spiritual body which St. Paul teaches us to expect would seem to be a body in which the spirit, which is the highest portion of our present triple nature (body, soul, and spirit), shall be the animating, vitalising principle, instead of that inferior principle which in Scripture is sometimes called the soul, the ψυχή, in contradistinction from the spirit or πνεῦμα. God "breathed into the nostrils" of the first man "the breath of life, and man became a

living *soul*." But St. Paul expressly tells us that the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, was made or became not a living soul, but a lifegiving spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45). The difference between the first and the second Adam, according to the apostle, is that spirit took the place in Christ which the animal soul did in Adam; in other words, that the body with which Christ rose has for its vitalising, animating principle, not the breath of that life which now animates our frail bodies and cannot secure their existence against numberless accidents and diseases, and at length against the inevitable decay of age, but that spiritual part of us which is now only a dweller in a tenement not altogether fitted for it, and from which it must ultimately be evicted. This declaration of the apostle opens out to us a completely new view of the Resurrection-body of our Saviour, and therefore at once accounts for all the strangeness which attaches to His appearances to His disciples after His death, because it represents them as what might well be expected in a body of so entirely different a constitution. The spirit is that part of our complex nature which is in necessary connection with necessary truth, and by which such truth is discovered and comprehended. Thus

a person who is capable of understanding the elementary truths of arithmetic and mathematics at once discerns such elementary truths to be not accidental, and such as might therefore be different from what they actually are, but truths which are essential, and which could not be different from what they are. For instance, it is simply impossible to suppose that two straight lines could enclose or shut in a space. It is simply impossible to suppose that two things which are each equal to some third thing should not be equal to each other. Truths like these are called *necessary* truths, because our minds or spirits are so constituted as to be in exact harmony with them. Now a body in which this spiritual part of our constitution is no longer a mere denizen or tenant, but of which it is actually the vitalising power, would seem necessarily to enjoy the same prerogatives, the same advantages, which its informing spirit enjoys. We are in our present state perpetually embarrassed by the inadequacy of the body to the mind or spirit, whereby mental exertion becomes mental effort, and soon exhausts the frame. May we not expect that hereafter, with bodies absolutely congenial to our minds, the exertion of the mind will involve no effort, will bring

with it no fatigue? Again, in our Lord's appearances after His Resurrection we have, I think, something more than a hint that we shall possess bodily powers resembling the power of the mind, *e.g.* in sudden and instantaneous transference from place to place, even as the mind can instantaneously transfer itself from one subject to another; in exemption from limitations of space and matter, even as the mind in its operations is exempt from limitations of space and matter. Thus we hear of our risen Lord being in the midst of His disciples in one moment, in spite of doors locked for fear of the Jews; and we hear of His disappearing with equal suddenness on another occasion in the very act of breaking bread and blessing it. We read of His being seen in Galilee, on the brink of the lake of Tiberias, with equal suddenness and unpreparedness. He goes before His disciples into Galilee, not with them. He has no known abode on earth; where He was during the intervals between His appearances we are not informed. And St. Luke, in the first chapter of the Acts, uses a word regarding these appearances which is otherwise appropriated to what we call visions.[1] It was a material body

[1] ὀπτανόμενος.

which appeared to them, a body which could be touched, which ate and drank before them, although we are carefully told that His doing this was to remove their doubts as to the reality of the body which they saw, not to satisfy the demands of appetite or the wants of nature ; it was a material body which talked with them and walked with them, but this body was subject to none of the limitations to which our present bodies are enslaved. All these curious symptoms, which are rather inferred from the Gospels than directly stated by them, to which they never call attention, and which, therefore, ordinary readers generally overlook,—all these strange phenomena, I say, entirely agree with the notions we might of ourselves be disposed to form of the nature and acts of a frame in which the highest principle that now exists in us should take the place now occupied by a lower and a merely animal principle. The spiritual body of our Lord is the key to the otherwise perplexing features of His appearances, those appearances being themselves foretastes, anticipations, in His person, of the nature and powers of that spiritual body with which St. Paul declares that we shall hereafter be invested.

But there is a further consideration to be taken into account.

I have said that the spirit in man is that part of our complex nature which takes cognisance of necessary and essential truths, and to which such truths are necessary and eternal. But it is to be remarked that the human spirit, as now constituted, does not feel the same immediate and instinctive certainty with regard to *all* necessary and essential truths. Thus the idea of a God who has created all things, and in whom all things consist, must surely be a necessary truth; but it does not appear so to all. With most men, indeed, I am inclined to think it is instinctive; but with many it is a subject of argument, with some few a matter even of denial. There are some who require to be reasoned into the belief that God exists; there are some who defy reasoning on the subject. And the existence and nature of God brings with it other truths which we generally call moral truths; for there is no sure foundation for *morals* as distinct from *custom* save the being and the will of God. There cannot be a law without a legislator, and if there be no God there is no legislator; none who has a right to impose his decrees upon us, for the mere will of the

majority can never bind the conscience of the individual; social morality is thus annihilated by atheism or agnosticism. Nay, more, if there be no God it is preposterous to talk of morality at all; for in that case all is mere mechanism, and it is impossible to grind morality out of mechanism. Now the being and attributes of God ought to be as certain to the mind of man as any truths of mathematics are. So ought, therefore, the truths of morality to be. Were we perfect spirits, we ought to have the same kind of intuitive, instinctive perception of religious and moral truth that we now have of mathematical truths. How it has come to pass that we have not such an intuitive perception of what must be equally necessary truth, no one has as yet explained. The only clue to this singular defect is the story of the temptation and fall of man. Now this intuitive perception which we lack in religion and morality, our Saviour seems to have possessed; and hence, probably, it came that He was never for a single instant perplexed as to what He should do or say on any occasion. The highest spiritual truths pertaining to God and our relations to Him—in other words, our duty—were as clear to Him as the lower ones pertaining to number and

space are to men in general. He could not be for a moment at a loss as to their application any more than we can be with regard to the bearing of such truths as that two and two make four, or that two straight lines cannot enclose a space.

Now our connection with the fact which we this day and every Lord's day celebrate resides in this, that as our future life depends on our Saviour's life, so we expect to be made like Him in that future life in all points short of His actual Deity. If we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall also be united with Him in the likeness of His Resurrection. We shall, therefore, in that future life not merely have bodies made like unto His body,—spiritual bodies, perfectly adequate to all the requirements of their informing, vitalising spirits,—we shall also have the same kind of intuitive perception as He had of the existence and nature of the Deity, and of our relations to Him. And this, I suppose, is the meaning of the Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They shall see God not with the eye of the body, with which no man hath seen or can see Him, but with the eye, the spiritual eye, of our future spiritual existence, which, our spirit being

then in perfect unison with His, shall perceive all that is discoverable to created intelligences of the One Supreme and Uncreated. The consequences, if they were the consequences, of the fall, the mind not perfectly in harmony with God, the defect of intuition as regards spiritual and moral truth, shall be removed; and though "it doth not yet appear plainly what we shall be, we know that we shall become like unto him, for we shall see him as he is." God and His attributes shall become as immediate a subject of intuition to us as the axioms of arithmetic or geometry are now; and the relations of our mind and nature to His, and of our minds and natures to each other, which we call respectively by the names of religion and morality, shall become equally intuitional, equally certain, and equally inevitable as applied to conduct.

Such are some of the results — the necessary results—of Christ's Resurrection. Life—full, essential, eternal life—to all who give themselves to Him, and in that life eternal and essential happiness, because it will be not merely the copy, but the outcome of His life, and therefore in absolute conformity with the will of God.

It seems strange, considering the immense importance of our Saviour's Resurrection, that it is in reality so little thought about. Though we nominally dedicate each seventh day to its commemoration, the Resurrection of our Lord certainly does not come into our minds with anything like the frequency of His death, to the memory of which only one day in the year is set apart. Various reasons may be given for this. One assuredly is this, that Christians have come to confound the Lord's Day with the Sabbath, the day commemorative of the Saviour's rising to renewed and endless activity with the day commemorative of God's resting after creation, and the one commemoration has too generally eclipsed the other. I think much positive mischief has been done in this way. Another reason is, that we do not generally realise what Christ's Resurrection actually means, and with what anticipations it is connected. Most Christians now, even those most devout, are hankering after some renewal or redintegration of the life that now is, with all its interests and pleasures, but without its pains. Such views have been even formulated and popularised in some little books bestowed on the English public by the lively genius of American

authors. We are to have all our present comforts and appliances, only in a higher and more enjoyable way. Such views rest really on conceptions of our future existence which are mean and false. This present world and all its belongings—all visible things, in a word—shall pass away. They belong to an order of things which is essentially evanescent, and which has mutation and decay and death stamped upon it. In the visible universe there is no abiding place, no eternal rest for the sons of God. Modern science has abundantly corroborated and confirmed a saying which to most philosophers in ancient times, and to all physicists up to fifty years ago in modern times, was unwelcome and absurd: the doctrine of an apostle that the things which are seen are temporal, last only for a time. Perhaps science will gradually come to accept the other part of the apostle's pronouncement, and to believe that the things which are not seen are eternal. It was over these temporal things, over this merely temporary state, that Christ's victory was achieved when He rose from the dead, and it is to our not conceiving of His Resurrection in this true light that much of our forgetfulness of it is due. We have grievously fallen away from the vividness with

which the early Christians realised the meaning of His Resurrection, as we have wholly abandoned the emblems by which they continually expressed it, and fed their minds with recollections of it. Go into the catacombs at Rome, or examine the pictures which have been made of the relics there found of the very earliest Church, and you will look in vain for the cross or the crucifix; the symbols of that death of agony are absent from early Christian art. Instead of the Saviour hanging extended on the cross, you see Him enthroned in mild and cheerful majesty in the midst of His apostles, teaching them; or as the good shepherd, bearing home the lambs upon His shoulder, and going forth before His flock. Those early believers, flying for their lives, hunted into caves and dens of the earth, yet fed their minds not on the contemplation of the sufferings of their Redeemer, but on the anticipations of His glory in heaven, or the recollections of His beneficence on earth. His death was to them, as their death was to themselves, merely the short, sharp passage to an eternity of blessedness, not conceived and expressed in half sensual imagery, not consisting in a happier worldliness, but exceeding anything that eye had seen, or ear heard, or heart

could imagine. Would to God we could rise to their level! discarding with them all those mournful emblems and paraphernalia which now make death terrible or ludicrous; those urns with weeping angels bending over them; those lugubrious accompaniments of death and funeral, which in reality contradict all Christian hope and make a parade of defeated instead of triumphant life! And we should do this, dear friends, if we could but rise to the height of the great argument of Christianity, Hope, and Faith, overcoming the seen and the temporal, and claiming the assured possession of the unseen and eternal.

Away then with gloom and downheartedness; away with *unbelief*, in other words. Arise and put a cheerful courage on! The grave is not the end; nor will this huge globe when it becomes a mere cinder, destitute of life, as it will do ultimately if left to itself; nor will this whole visible universe, when universal stagnation and therefore universal death shall have seized it, be the end; for Christ hath gained the victory over death, and hath opened to us the gate of everlasting life,—of life that deserves the name, because it is essential and necessary, and can no more change or expire than can the Deity Himself, whose life it is!

This is the meaning of Easter Day; this is the meaning of every Lord's Day. A living Christ, not a dead Christ; a risen Christ, not a merely crucified Christ; an invisible universe which shall abide for ever, when all this visible universe shall have disappeared. "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou endurest; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years have no end. THE CHILDREN OF THY SERVANTS SHALL CONTINUE, AND THEIR SEED SHALL BE ESTABLISHED BEFORE THEE."

III

PRAYER

O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.—Ps. lxv. 2.

In nothing be anxious: but in everything *by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be declared unto God.*—Phil. iv. 6.

I intend to speak to you this morning on the Reasonableness and Efficacy of Prayer. I shall treat this subject not on the mere grounds of what the Bible says. Taking the authority of Scripture as supreme, the efficacy of prayer and the duty of prayer must be at once acknowledged. Almost every page of the Bible inculcates or assumes it, and one whole book in the Bible consists of nothing else than prayers. It is altogether unnecessary, therefore, to urge it on you on this head. What I wish to do is rather to show you that on grounds of pure

reason, of mere natural religion, prayer may be expected to be efficacious. In other words, I wish to show you that between Revelation and Reason there is, on this point, an entire agreement; that Reason here actually supports the direct teachings of Revelation, and that Revelation only gives more precise and full assurance of what Reason dictates. In treating the subject thus, I must, of course, assume something. I must assume that there is a Being to whom prayer can be addressed; a God, in other words; and that God a Personal Being, not one who is a mere name for the aggregate of the forces of Nature, but a Being to whom Nature, *i.e.* this universe, owes its existence and its maintenance, its creation and its preservation. I must assume this for the present, because, though I fully believe it is capable of being scientifically proved, it is not possible in a single sermon to go into the proof. I may, however, without taxing your time or attention too much, indicate the nature of that proof which science now furnishes. It is simply this: the universe is now known to be tending to cessation of motion, *i.e.* to death, if left to itself; it is known that in time, enormously distant it may be, but still finite, and in respect to some parts of

the universe almost measurable, the whole visible universe will cease to move, and cease, therefore, to be a possible abode of life. Now what will end must have begun. If the universe will have an end of motion, it must have had a beginning of motion. And this beginning must have been given it by something outside itself. This something — this power outside itself—is what most men call God. The Positivist, the Agnostic, may choose to give this Power some other name; but of the actuality of the existence of this Power not even the Agnostic doubts. The great discovery of the correlation of forces and the conservation of energy —a discovery made within the last half-century — has made Atheism unscientific and logically impossible.

Taking then for granted the existence of a Personal God, of a Being, a Power, outside the universe, not identified with it, to whom the universe owes its motion certainly, its existence probably—a Power whose volition has called forth that cosmos, that mundane order which we see around us, and of which, indeed, we are parts ourselves—taking this for granted as the starting-point of our inquiry, the question arises, Does this involve, by necessary con-

sequence, that, to use the language of the Bible, this God will be "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" in prayer and otherwise? that He will attend to prayer and answer it?

Now this question regards not the mere Personality or separate personal existence of the Deity, but His moral nature and attributes. Let us then examine it by the light of Reason and Experience.

It is obvious that every man of science in the pursuit of abstract knowledge, or in the examination of nature, acts, whether he is aware of it or no, upon the maxim that God *is* a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Abstract truth, such, for instance, as pure mathematics, is pursued by methods which are assured of a certain measure of success. Now this means, in other words, that abstract or mathematical truth and the human mind are definitely correlated to each other. Again, the human mind is so constituted as to be able to gain a certain insight into the relations of the world of phenomena. Now this, in both cases, must result from the purpose of the Creator, if there be a Creator. He must have so arranged things as to reward the researches of those that diligently seek Him in so far as He is disclosed,

whether by His external works or by the mental constitution He has given us. It is part of the scheme of the universe that discovery shall reward research. Further, those who have given themselves up to making such researches are perfectly aware that in all successful research a moral element is invariably involved. In purely mental research diligence and patience are required; in external investigations, when the object is to ascertain facts, the inquirers must be predominatingly led by a love of facts; in other words, by a love of truth. Nature may be interrogated with a bias. She may be put to the question, so to speak, for the purpose of getting an answer previously determined on, and when so interrogated she does not yield up her secrets. Those only will get a true answer who are resolved, like experimentalists such as Pasteur and Tyndall, to ascertain, not what suits some favourite hypothesis, but what is in itself true, whether it suits a favourite hypothesis or not. Nature deals with men precisely as God is said to do; with the froward she shows herself perverse.

Now all this, which is mere matter of scientific ascertainment, appears to me to bear directly and very strongly on the character of God as involved in

the question of the reasonableness of prayer. If we find a certain feeling, disposition, or conviction to be the feeling, the disposition, the conviction of the average of the human race—there are, of course, individual and very respectable exceptions, though one never can be sure how such exceptional characters may have been formed; but if one finds a certain feeling, or disposition, or conviction enormously preponderant, and that not at all merely among uncultivated races, it will be difficult to avoid the conclusion that it has been implanted in us for a certain purpose; and this involves the further notion that, if this purpose were utterly vain and fruitless, it would impugn the moral nature of the Deity. Now this I conceive to be the case with prayer. Prayer has throughout all known ages recommended itself to the human mind so powerfully that even in religions which deny the existence of a Personal God, distinct from Nature, and in which therefore prayer can have no proper place, it has nevertheless forced its way. Take Buddhism for an instance. This religion, which is now professed by more than three hundred millions of human beings, rests on the very notion that individual personal existence is an evil, and that the great object of each should be to

lose all personality in the great ocean of universal impersonal Being, which is the only God whom Buddhism acknowledges. Prayer in such a system is an evident absurdity, for what is there to pray to? You might as well pray to the winds or to the waves as to the deity of Buddhism. Yet even by Buddhists prayer is practised extensively, devoutly, absurdly.

Is not a fact like this tantamount in value to a demonstration that prayer—*i.e.* intercourse between the individual man and God—intercourse as between two sentient, intelligent beings — is, according to human nature, reasonable, since it has forced itself even into a system the very principle of which involves a denial of its possibility?

Of course I am aware that this may be stigmatised as an argument based on a corruption. Prayer, it will be said, is a corruption of original Buddhism. I care not whether it be a corruption or not; that is nothing to the purpose; it is, at any rate, a phenomenon, and a phenomenon on a very grand scale, and as such it demands an explanation. And what other explanation can be given of it but this, that it is nature asserting itself against system?

And in itself, beside the argument based on

almost universal practice, the idea that intercourse can be carried on between the soul and God seems reasonable, if there be a God distinct from nature. For, if so, He, as having made all things, must be conceived as understanding all things. Such understanding, such acquaintance, must embrace each individual personality. If Nature owe her existence to a Creator—and this is involved in the very idea of a personal God—she must owe to Him her actuation, her maintenance at each moment. As Goethe expressed it, God is not to be conceived as letting the universe merely circle round His finger. This, then, involves, of necessity, knowledge of each particle or molecule—of each several thing—much more of each several mind. If, then, God must know each one of us—and this is surely involved in the conception of a God—He must know each thought of each one of us ; each thought as it passes through the brain and there stereotypes itself in the modifications of our organism. He that made the eye, shall He not see? He that formed the ear, shall He not hear? He that gave man understanding, shall He not know? And, following out this obvious reasoning, He that gave man a moral nature of a certain kind, whether that nature be

the original impress or the subsequent necessary development—for this matters not—shall He not treat man accordingly? Shall He so "despise the works of his own hands" as to disappoint the universal expectation of His creatures? to treat them in a way in which, if they treated each other, we should justly call them swindlers and cheats? Does not the very analogy of science and religion—two things the one of which some of the most sceptical now acknowledge to be as necessary as the other—does not the very analogy between science and religion in their relations to the human mind, require that, as God rewards them that diligently seek Him in the one domain, so He shall reward them that diligently seek Him in the other? As there is a complete coherence throughout nature, so far as we can observe, this reasoning appears to me invincible, otherwise you would have one whole set of mental experiences placed outside the pale of that universe of which all things that we know are parts, removed by a sudden break of continuity from the scope of those laws which one certainly would expect to hold good throughout.

Of course one obvious answer to this reasoning is, that we can have no certain knowledge, when we

pray, that our prayers are heard and answered. With one addition this is true; but that addition makes all the difference in the world. We can have no knowledge of the hearing and answering of prayer, *such as shall be capable of being proved to others.* All attempts to *demonstrate* the efficacy of prayer must fail. But this does not in the least impeach the intrinsic reasonableness of prayer. There are numbers of things the existence of which cannot be proved to others, and which nevertheless every one acts on for himself. The affections of individuals towards each other cannot be proved; the signs which are supposed to exhibit them may be delusions or impostures. Yet we accept the existence of these affections on the score of their immense probability. But certainly one thing may be said with perfect truth; and that is, that no one who has been in the habit of praying in the way in which a creature ought to pray to his Creator, with the due measure of commingled reverence and trust, will say that his doing so has been useless and ineffective.

On the supposition, then, that God has a personal existence, that He is not merely the sum of the forces of Nature, but a Being, in some respects analogous to ourselves, in possessing an existence distinct from

the things around us, and capable of realising this distinction, a nature, too, which we cannot without absurdity suppose to be inferior to our own, as it would be if it were not possessed of moral perfections akin but infinitely superior to those moral qualities which we ourselves possess, and in which the really great thinkers of all times have always recognised the highest characteristic of humanity—on this most reasonable, nay, inevitable supposition, we cannot but conclude that prayer, or the intercourse between the individual soul and its Creator, as it is plainly possible, so it is also reasonable ; that as the Creator must know our thoughts—and words are only employed by us in prayer in order to make our thoughts more definite—so it is entirely reasonable to direct to God and to discipline our thoughts according to this presumption ; and this is precisely what the apostle's words in my second text are intended to convey. Not as though such direction and discipline of thought were necessary for the better information of the Deity, but that it is necessary for us that our intercourse with Him may be real. A man will talk differently if he knows that another is listening from what he would if he knew it not. And this quite without hypocrisy. It is not a suppression of truth,

not a pretence of feeling what we do not really feel, that is wanted; but, as I have put it, a control, a direction, a discipline of thoughts, which shall make them not *seem to be*—for with God no seeming avails—but actually *be* different from what they would be, supposing there were no consciousness of the Divine Presence and the Divine hearing.

But it will be said that all this may, indeed, remove from the sphere of unreasonableness prayer for what are usually called spiritual blessings, but that it does not at all bear upon prayer for material blessings. As a Person, God may have intercourse with our minds and spirits, and may influence them in ways which, though we cannot understand or define, it were most unreasonable to deny: even as we know that men affect each other's minds and spirits in many ways which we cannot at all explain, but which fewer and fewer persons now refuse to believe merely because we cannot understand them. But this, it will be said, is not enough to justify the direction that "in *everything*, by prayer and supplication, accompanied with thanksgiving, our requests are to be declared to God." If prayer be allowable at all, it can only be for its reflex action on the mind from which it emanates, or for some inexpli-

cable, but not on that account unreal, influence of the Deity upon that mind ; the iron chain of physical causation leaves no place for the efficacious intervention of prayer in the external world. The unchangeableness of the laws of Nature is supposed to be the fundamental postulate of science, without which science could not exist. And this unchangeableness is by many, even by some devout Christians, supposed at once to refute the possibility of the Divine intervention in the external and material world. Prayer, for instance, for health, or fine weather, or fertile seasons is almost a blasphemy, it is said, for it means nothing less than that God is to change or violate the laws of Nature on our behalf—to perform a miracle, in short.

I have no wish to conceal the full force of this difficulty. I have felt it myself so strongly, that for a time I was fairly overcome by it. I may, therefore, with the more propriety claim your attention to the argument which at length satisfied my own mind that this difficulty, however apparently formidable, is really baseless.

I take up an apple from the ground. Do I, by acting thus, suspend or violate the law of gravitation which had brought the apple to the ground when it

detached itself from the tree? Such language has been sometimes incautiously used, even by persons who ought to know better. For, of course, it is absurd. We cannot either suspend, or violate, or modify a single law of Nature for a single instant. When I take up an apple from the ground, to which the force of gravitation had brought it, I only introduce another force, the force of my muscles. This muscular force is set in action by the power of the will, determining that such and such action shall be taken, such and such work be done. Now with all this we are so familiar that we generally fail to perceive how absolutely inexplicable it is. For we can trace back the exertion of the muscles to the nerves of motion, and this we now connect with a certain change in the tissue of the brain, which seems to be the organ of sensation, whilst this, again, is traced back to, or at least connected with, a certain action on the brain produced by another set of nerves, the nerves of sensation. But this, as you perceive, is all pure mechanism. Were this all—and this is all that physiology can detect—we should be mere machines. Volition, or choice between different courses of action, finds no place in it. It is a mere chain of physical causation in which the

intervention of the mind as a determining will cannot be detected. The phenomena of volition which originates action, or of choice which determines action, are at present a perfect mystery: we are conscious of willing, of choosing, but where and how that volition or choice steps in, no one hath as yet found out. If, then, some people choose to deny that these phenomena represent anything real, because they are, up to this time, inscrutable; if they choose to tell us that we are not to believe in anything beyond what physiology *at present* is able to detect, and that therefore we are, on the score of our *present* physiological knowledge, to assert that consciousness is a delusion, and that volition, choice, and consequent responsibility are all mere imposture; with such people I do not argue. We have no common ground to stand on; and it is the less necessary to trouble myself about them and their strange theories, resting as they do on the double assumption, first, that nothing must be held to exist in the human being beyond what physiology can detect; and, secondly, that our present physiological knowledge is the limit of future physiological discovery—it is the less necessary, I say, to trouble myself or you about these people and their strange

theories, because these theories are simply incompatible with all the instincts of life, with all the provisions of social existence; for our instincts every moment suppose volition and responsibility, and the provisions of social existence do the same. Were everything in us mere mechanism, were we mere watches or clocks, or heat-engines, it is obvious there would be neither choice nor responsibility; neither duty nor morality. The automatist, therefore, is outside the pale of argument, just as much as the man would be who should say that two and two do not necessarily make four, or that two straight lines might possibly enclose a space. But if either of these persons were to attempt carrying his theories into practice, he would be put at once out of the pale of society. The logic of facts—the logic of the multiplication table, of the hand-rule, and of the gaol—would be too strong for him. It is only by practically contradicting his own theory at every moment of his existence that the man who denies volition and choice, any more than the man who should deny the properties of numbers or straight lines, can be allowed the privilege of human converse and association. Yet, observe, the mechanical theory is perfectly incapable of confutation, except

by the absurdity of the results to which it leads ; for it is impossible to perceive where and how the will of man steps in to modify the results of the mechanism of Nature. That it does so come in we see and feel ; but how it comes in no one, so far, hath been able to find out. Of course I do not mean that the human will is capable of originating or creating energy, but only of directing it. Energy in itself can no more be created by us than matter can. But it can be directed. What my will does when I raise my arm, for instance, is not to call energy into existence, but simply to give direction to already existing energy. And so throughout all human, all organic action. Yet we all know what stupendous results have been brought about, what changes in the very face of Nature have been produced, by the will of man, incapable as it is of either violating or suspending a single natural law, of calling into existence or of annihilating a single atom of matter, a single unit of energy. The cutting down of forests by the intervention of the human will has altered the climate of large portions of the globe. Barren lands have been fertilised, fertile lands have been reduced to barrenness, by the intervention of the human will. An opulent kingdom is seated in a

country reclaimed from the sea by the intervention of the human will. Here, then, we have enormous changes in the face of Nature, all produced by the intervention, *through* the laws of Nature, of the will of man ; that will intervening in a way we cannot at all discover or explain. Are we then to suppose that the Creator has no means of exerting His will on Nature *through* the very laws He has impressed on her, analogous to, but of course infinitely more perfect than, the means which we His creatures have? That the Divine mind cannot do things similar to, but much greater than, those which the human mind can do? That the Creator, in a word, is actually inferior to His creatures in the power of making use of His own works? Surely this were absurd! The intervention of the Divine will, therefore, in answer to prayer, by simply directing the energies and powers of Nature to a result which, if left undirected, they would not have arrived at, seems to me, on the most careful reflection, just as possible as that of which we see the results in every part of the globe at every moment—I mean the intervention of the human will, not in the way of suspending or superseding, but in the way of using the laws of Nature by directing natural forces into certain channels.

If it be objected that the analogy between the conscious intervention of the human will and the supposed intervention of the Divine will breaks down, because we see the intervention of the human will, but do not see the intervention of the Divine will, I reply, Not so. This is not the fact. We do not see, in the case of the human will, its intervention. We only see the results of its intervention. We see, not the intervention of the will, but only the mechanism by which it intervenes. We see the woodman felling the tree; but we do not see the will that actuates his muscles. How the will actuates those muscles we are absolutely ignorant. The human will acts through the human frame; but how it acts on that frame we cannot tell. May not the Divine will act through the frame of the universe just as easily as the human will through the human body? And if we cannot imagine how, is this not just as impossible in the one case as in the other? Is not the mystery just as great in the one case as in the other?

It is, therefore, quite illogical to deny the analogy between the actual exertion of our own will and the possible exertion of the will of God, unless, indeed, on the supposition that either God has no will, or

that He has no existence. To say that He exists and yet has no will, is to make Him what we are conscious of not being ourselves—a mere machine; in other words, it is to say that the Creator is actually inferior to His creatures in the scale of being. To say that He does not exist at all is the only logical course for those who deny the possible analogous intervention of His will through the laws of Nature in reply to prayer.

In fact, the possibility of the Divine Being's answering prayer is nothing more than the *adaptivity* of God, if I may coin a word; the power of God, *i.e.* to adapt Himself and His action to the varying action produced by the power of choice and self-determination in His rational creatures; and in order to get rid of such adaptivity, such power, in Him, we must simply deny His rational creatures all power of choice and self-determination, and make consciousness a delusion, responsibility a lie, and morality a word without meaning. For the nature of the Creator must answer to the nature of the creature. If it does not, there is a radical disunion in things; a break, not of continuity, but of coherency, which reduces the cosmos to chaos, the universe to anarchy.

The considerations we have entertained lead up to the refutation of another argument against the reasonableness of prayer. As the argument last examined rests on the (presumed) unchangeableness of the laws of Nature, so is this argument based on the unchangeableness of the Author of those laws.

God, it is said, must be unchangeable. Your own Scriptures say, "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." His purposes, then, cannot be at the mercy of the changing will of man.

Now this argument, which I have often heard adduced with a triumphant air, rests entirely on a confusion of thought. It confounds unchangeableness of general character with obstinacy of particular purpose.

Consider the matter thus. Would any one tax a parent with changefulness and fickleness who, after disinheriting his son for disobedience and profligacy, should allow his purpose to be changed by that son's sincere repentance? Would not the parent's adhering, under such circumstances, to his former testamentary dispositions be set down to mere brutal obstinacy, and condemned as being in the highest degree unjust? Now mark: were the

objection to prayer on the score of the Divine unchangeableness valid, then the obstinate parent who should refuse to admit his son's sincere repentance as a reason for restoring him to favour would be entirely justified. He would be "perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect." Not the tender parent in the most touching of our Saviour's parables, who, "when his returning son was still a long way off," yet recognised him in his eager love, and "ran and fell on his neck and kissed him," but the relentless tyrant, with whom there is no place for penitence, with whom tears of sorrow do not avail, would most nearly approach the character of Deity. Shall we listen to an argument against prayer which is really based on such a blasphemy as this?

And what holds good of prayer for pardon holds good of prayer for any other blessing. It is precisely because God's *character* is unchangeable, that His *purposes* are flexible. It is because He is a just God that He is a Saviour: *i.e.* that He adapts His providence to the changing characters with which it has to deal. He treats those differently who treat Him differently; and this precisely because He is in Himself the same and changes not.

Beaten out of other arguments against the

reasonableness of prayer, objectors are fond of appealing to our modesty. We are too insignificant to be noticed by the Maker of all the magnificences we see around us and above us. This argument is not new. It had occurred to David three thousand years ago, though he knew better than to be overcome by it. "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest visit him?" And what David knew of the vastness of creation was as a drop in the bucket compared to what we know of it. But, natural and plausible as is this thought, it rests entirely on an inadequate and unworthy conception alike of the nature of the universe and of the nature and character of God. The enormous numbers, the utterly inconceivable dimensions, with which physical astronomy deals, excite amazement, stupefaction, almost terror; one feels himself as nothing in that huge vault of illimitable space! But turn from the telescope to the microscope; see what it reveals; listen to the approximations which the most recent physical science hath made to the numbers and the size of the ultimate atoms that compose, let us say,

one single drop of water; in each such drop it is now calculated there are probably as many atoms as would be represented by the figure 1 with twenty-six ciphers after it; reflect on such revelations of the infinitely minute as this, and you are lost in astonishment quite as great as that which the relative magnitude of the universe excites, and come to the final thought, a thought far more true and just than that which spake out in the ignorance of the Shepherd King, that with God nothing is great and nothing small, nothing important and nothing unimportant; that such terms and notions are only appropriate to human limitation; that to the illimitable God they have no relevance. And when from the universe around us we turn to the universe within us, are we to think meanly of that being who, though so limited in space and time, his life on earth only a span long, hath nevertheless "outstepped," and that not in fancy only, "the blazing walls that bound the world," and hath "traversed all immensity," not with random guess, like the poet-philosopher of old, but with sober certainty of quest? Is there nothing akin to the great Artificer and Geometer in the intellect which hath advanced even thus far in the discovery of His

works? And how much further human intelligence may hereafter pierce who may venture to predict? If creation has grown on us since David wrote, has not man grown on us too? And does not the great fact which lies at the root of all revealed religion—I mean the union of the Divine with the human in the Incarnation—become more instead of less credible, in the light which modern research flashes back on the intelligence which is capable of making it? It is, therefore, not an appeal to modesty, but an appeal to thoughtlessness, which would discredit prayer on the ground of the vastness of creation and the littleness of man.

If God does not grant every prayer, it is because He knows what is good for us far too well to do so. Were all the wishes for things external to our spirits granted which even the best of men from time to time conceive, what wild work would it make of their lives and of their usefulness! How many prayers, too, are offered up which could not be fulfilled in favour of some without injuring, perhaps destroying, others! How many prayers clash with each other! Can God be expected to answer prayer quite irrespective of benefit or mischief? quite regardless of the mutual interferences of the requests

preferred by different sets of men? quite neglectful of the advancement of His own designs for mankind at large? When Scripture represents the Deity as promising that He will never disregard prayer, does it really mean that the supreme government of the world is to pass out of the hands of the Omniscient and All-wise into the hands of beings who are always more or less ignorant, and often very foolish, though they may be very well meaning? "Prayer moves the hand that moves the world." But does it move it mechanically? Christian feeling, quite as much as common sense, must answer—No! But this does not mean that anything, no matter what it be, is outside the scope of prayer, as many persons—I am sorry to say many divines even—are now telling us. It is not that we have no right to pray for external blessings, or what we deem blessings. But it is that we must offer all our prayers for them with due submission to God's better wisdom. "Not my will, but thine be done!" Thus prayed our Lord: thus should all His followers pray. Only one prayer needs no such qualification; the prayer for that Holy Spirit, which, in the Christian doctrine, is the direct influence of the Deity on the spirits He has created, bestowing on them the highest wisdom,

purifying them even as He, the Fountain of Purity, is pure, and leading them up to Himself, and to the possession in Himself, of that eternal life of which He is the source and fulness.

I am conscious that I have, in the last portion of my discourse, passed beyond the thesis I had undertaken to argue in favour of, that thesis simply being that prayer is intrinsically reasonable on the supposition that there is a Personal God, and that His character in respect of goodness and truthfulness is not inferior to ours. It is very difficult for a Christian minister to sink for a time below the level of his own belief, to argue on grounds common to mere Theists. Yet those grounds, and the arguments based on them, are so strong, that they materially confirm the positive precepts regarding prayer which Scripture multiplies, and which no personage in Scripture enforces with such energy as Christ. In one singular, almost startling, passage He shrinks not from comparing the God of Justice with an unjust judge, in order the more forcibly to exhibit the absurdity of supposing that God will not reply to prayer. It needs such encouragement; for of all Christian duties, whilst none is more necessary, none is more difficult, than prayer.

The pomps and ceremonies of public worship—I mean this in no unfriendly sense—the concurrent hymn, the stupendous concert of thousands of voices lifted up in consonant harmony, or in even more overpowering unison, the chant of the trained choristers, the majestic swell of the solemn organ as it rolls its vastness of sound through the long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults of some huge cathedral, the solitary voice of the intoning priest, which makes the succeeding stillness only the more felt—all this magnificence of worship, costly though it be, enormous as has been the lavishment of wealth and genius requisite to establish and maintain it, is yet only on the threshold; and thousands are doubtless impressed by it who yet never cross the threshold, never realise the Unseen Presence that dwells in the Holy of Holies beyond it. But to *feel* that God is actually there, that one is speaking to Him just as one man speaks to another; that He most absolutely and certainly hears everything said to Him, though He does not audibly reply to the supplications put up, sometimes in voiceless agony—*this*, which is true prayer, and which can be even better transacted in the solitude of the chamber, where no human eye can see and no

human ear can hear, this is indeed difficult. Yet, till this has been once attained, prayer has never been really put up at all.

I have been endeavouring to remove difficulties which, if I may judge of others by myself, sometimes paralyse the soul in the very act and attempt to pray. To appeal to feeling in dealing with such difficulties—to treat them with effusive rhetoric—is worse than useless, for it is apt to be taken as a virtual confession that on grounds of reason these difficulties are insurmountable. I have therefore dealt with them in what some of you may probably consider a coldly logical and almost repellent manner. For unless these difficulties are shown to be really unreasonable and groundless—not only contrary to feeling and affection, but contrary to reason—they will come back again and again, and "restrain prayer" more and more. The most ardent faith must be shown to be entirely consistent with the coolest reason, if faith is to overcome the world and to mount up to Him whose Incarnate Son is declared by the apostle to be the very Word or Reason of God.

One word more, but that the crowning word.

The considerations I have adduced are infinitely

reinforced by our blessed Lord. He came, above all things, to disclose unto us God. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He has enjoined on us to pray: to pray always and not to faint. He hath taught us how to pray. "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven." The Lord's Prayer is a summary of Christianity. Its opening words are a summary of the character of God. "Our Father." If these two words do not bring us to the feet of God in prayer, then nothing can.

IV

THE MINISTRY OF THE BODY

Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.—ROM. viii. 23.

"VANITY of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath man of all his labour wherein he laboureth under the sun? One generation goeth, and another generation cometh; and the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he ariseth. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north: it turneth about continually in its course, and the wind returneth again to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again. All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it:

the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."

These melancholy words, the despairing utterance of a Jew who, in the terrible struggles of the Maccabean times, and under the influence of effete Greek philosophy, had lost his old faith without gaining anything to support him instead of it,—these melancholy words, introduction to a most melancholy book, express the feelings which the contemplation of the vastness and sameness of nature and the littleness of man has always produced on minds abandoned to such contemplation. The ancient classics, as all know who have been trained therein, abound in similar lamentations over the aimlessness and fruitlessness of (human) life; its brief enjoyments, its resultless waste, its gradually but surely deepening disappointments. And though modern science has discovered that the author of Ecclesiastes was mistaken in thinking that all things remain always the same, though it is now known that this earth will not abide for ever, that it had a beginning of existence and will have an end of it, that constant

flux rather than enduring sameness is the law of nature, yet it cannot tell what preceded the beginning nor what will follow the ending of phenomenal existence. Progress upon the whole there seems to be, from the lower to the higher, but with many and marked exceptions; and this progress itself is so slow, the scale on which it moves is so enormous, that man's personal experience cannot perceive it. To us it is as though it were not; and meanwhile the course of nature goes on for us with remorseless uniformity. For us the thing that hath been is the thing that shall be; the sun rises and sets, the seasons change, men are born and live and love and die; the old story repeats itself with wearisome monotony amidst all the discoveries and improvements that make life more rapid but not more happy; there are the bright hopes, the eager life, the longing for enjoyment, the resolve to do great things of youth and early manhood; then gradually the powers diminish, doing becomes more difficult, enjoyment less possible, the soaring anticipations subside into disappointment. What with the friction of life, what with the limitations of the intellect, what with lost opportunities, what with the gradual decay of the body, what with the inevitable with-

drawal of the objects of affection, the summary of the most successful career must ever be, "Vanity of vanities; vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Now surely this feeling is in itself a strong indication of something beyond the present scene. Were what we now experience *all*, the life of man would be unaccountable; to the highest and most thoughtful it would be intolerable. I say the life of *man*, for the lower animals exhibit no trace of those feelings of disappointment and conscious imperfection which the writer of Ecclesiastes has so gloomily depicted. And this feeling of conscious imperfection, which all the amazing discoveries of science seem only to make more distressing—this feeling which frets against the limitations of intellect and action, though of itself it could not establish the fact of another life hereafter, does most powerfully corroborate the reasons we have from other quarters for expecting it. Pessimism, like that of Ecclesiastes, is the most powerful argument I know outside direct revelation for a life beyond the grave. I lay no stress whatever on the metaphysical reasonings which seem to have in some way satisfied the mind of one of our deepest thinkers; the simplicity of the soul's essence and its consequent indiscerptibility and

indestructibility—such speculations are but a poor foundation for any certain hope ; the Christian reason for hoping and awaiting with full assurance a personal hereafter is the justice and benevolence of God, who has surely not made man in vain, nor decreed that after a brief tenancy of this globe,—brief in comparison with the life of the universe,—the whole race shall eventually disappear, and all its powers and struggles end in resultless annihilation. Above all, our reason for expecting a personal immortality is the great fact that Christ has risen from the dead, and has thus brought to light the life and immortality, which if we forecast in vain, we are as much below the brutes in truth and symmetry of being as we are above them in the power and nature of our intelligence. Nor is it a trifling corroboration of the Resurrection of our Saviour that it bears out the hopes which are forced on us by considerations such as those I have been adverting to ; still more, that it bears out these hopes in a manner for which Christ's contemporaries were utterly unprepared, and which, therefore, their own invention, if that had been at work, would never have devised. The resurrection of the body, to which St. Paul looks as the completion of our adoption, was the very

last thing to which the longing for immortality in the ancient world would have resorted. Those thinkers in classic days who ventured to entertain a dim and distant hope of a future existence, always spoke of it as connected with the discarding of the trammels of the body, which they regarded as an incubus pressing on the free development and action of the mind or spirit. Hence, when Paul preached Jesus and His Resurrection as the basis of our future hopes, he was ridiculed by the very men who would have listened respectfully to a dissertation on our innate and necessary immortality, and on the blessedness of a soul freed for ever from the burden of the flesh. But Paul had no such doctrine as was then fashionable to preach to the assembled philosophers and idlers who sought a gentle excitement in listening to what this babbler might say. He preached Jesus and His Resurrection as the ground and type of ours —the first term of a new series of existence; and the assembly laughed and jeered and dismissed him with polite contempt. Like modern sceptics, they probably thought that no supernatural fact could be accepted on mere historic evidence, especially as that fact went in the teeth of all their prepossessions. They were, each set of them, satisfied with their own

philosophic schemes, just as philosophers are now, though no two of these schemes agreed together; and so, without any further examination, they went away, dispensed from inquiry by the intrinsic absurdity of the new doctrine; and the schools of Athens in a few years all came to nought, conquered by the crucified Galilean and His mad apostle, as Festus thought him.

Yet it is curious to remark how this triumph of Christianity over philosophy was for a long time qualified, and even turned into apparent defeat by the very advocates of Christianity themselves. *Metaphysics corrupted Christianity*, and though the great cardinal fact of our religion, the Resurrection of Christ, was not formally denied, its significance was lost. In the last century the argument for an hereafter ignored the Resurrection altogether. Nay, it was really incompatible with it. For if it be desirable for the soul to be delivered from all connection with the body, if death is to be welcomed because it will effect this deliverance, if the soul thus delivered will have a separate and more dignified existence, then the resurrection, whether of Christ, or of ourselves after the type of Christ, is a mistake. If we are better off without a body than with one,

why should we, in the language of St. Paul, await the redemption of the body as the completion of our adoption into the family of God? Why should we desire, as the same apostle elsewhere says we do, not to be unclothed, stripped of this present miserable earthly frame, but rather to be clothed upon, invested, while still in this body, with that celestial mansion, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, which Paul regards as having the power of absorbing or transmuting our present earthly frame? Why should the Church in the most solemn and pathetic of all her offices pray that it may please God shortly to accomplish the number of His elect and to hasten His kingdom, that so we may have our perfect consummation and bliss in His eternal and everlasting glory? A prayer which implies that our perfect consummation is not reached, our perfect bliss is not attained at the moment when we die; that it awaits that final advent of the Judge of all when, the further increase of the human race being arrested, all that compose its now completed sum shall appear in a new bodily form before the Throne. I boldly say that Christianity, as understood and proclaimed by Paul, is a mistake, if the metaphysical theology of the last

century be true. If the soul can act better, can, indeed, only then act freely when it is delivered from bodily trammels, then the resurrection of the body is an impertinence, and Christianity is the degradation, not the exaltation, of our hopes. And in this light, no doubt, it presented itself to many of the idling philosophasters on Mars' Hill.

Are, then, Christianity and philosophic thought irreconcilable? Must we give up the one for the other, and make our choice which we will retain? Here, I conceive, comes in a case of Virgil's adage: "The first path of deliverance, a thing you least expect, shall be opened for you by your apparent enemies." Physiology, or the accurate examination of animated nature, has stepped in to correct, by its careful observations, the fancy flights of metaphysics. Without pretending to define the nature of the soul, or mind, or intellectual principle, whatever we may call it, recognising only that there is a something which secures identity under the constant flux of changing sensation and emotion, the wisest physiologists have endeavoured to trace the means through which this principle of sameness operates. They have ascertained that for every mental effort, for every emotion, there is a definite corresponding

change in a certain substance in the brain. No thought of the mind but leaves its trace upon the body. And thus, when the brain becomes diseased, the action of the mind becomes distorted ; sometimes unduly accelerated, sometimes altogether checked. Mental disease is therefore only a phrase retained for convenience, to denote such bodily disease as renders the mind incapable of due action.

Now it seems quite obvious, and yet I know not whether it has ever been pointed out, that this discovery is altogether in favour of the Christian doctrine of the future life. That doctrine represents our final consummation and bliss as conditional on our being reunited with a body, but a body of infinitely higher capacities than the body with which we are now endued. Directly in the teeth of those metaphysical speculations which fed the half-hearted, desponding hopes of the best among the ancients, and which were revived by Christian apologists in the last century, Christianity tells us that it is in the perfecting and exalting of our bodily frame that we must look for our ultimate happiness. Anticipating by the actual fact of Christ's Resurrection and the doctrine based upon it the tendency of modern physiological research, Christianity, thus restored to

what it was in apostolic preaching, what it is in the creeds of the universal or Catholic Church, finds an ally where it is generally thought to have found a foe, and in the recent discoveries of physiology obtains corroborative evidence of its truth the most powerful because the least intentional,—the most powerful because absolutely non-collusive. For assuredly physiologists have not been led to their investigations by any wish or expectation that their result would be favourable to Christianity, in which many of them did not believe,—to which some of them have been bitterly hostile. Yet their investigations, conducted from whatever motive save love of the Gospel, really accord with the doctrine of the Gospel as preached by Paul and ridiculed by the Athenian loungers,—accord with it far better than do the systems of those metaphysicians who, whether defending or assailing Christianity, have equally mistaken its nature and perverted its message. And surely the fact that the Gospel two thousand years ago proclaimed a hope far more in unison with recent discoveries than with the conceptions of the times which gave it birth, surely this fact is one of the most striking contributory evidences of its divinity.

On the present occasion I have not time to follow out the line of thought I have ventured to indicate. That I must leave to your own reflections. But I will endeavour very briefly to point out the bearing of the true Christian doctrine, asserting as it does the necessity of a body for the perfection of our existence, on the subject of the care due to our present bodily frame, this body of our humiliation, as St. Paul denominates it and as we assuredly experience it to be alike in its weakness, its wants, and its evanescence.

And here one of the most noticeable particulars is the circumstance that, in marked opposition to all Oriental theosophies, our Saviour Himself invariably treated the human frame with the tenderest care and the most absolute respect.

Almost all the mighty works by which He accredited Himself as a messenger of God, a representation of the Divine, were miracles either of healing the diseases, or supplying the wants, or even, in one case, ministering to the enjoyments of the body. Completely alien from that gnosticism which soon began to leaven the Church, and has corrupted it more or less ever since,—a system which saw in matter generally an antagonist to the Creator and

to mind, and therefore treated the body as an enemy to be overcome and destroyed,—Christ came eating and drinking; His most exquisite parables were uttered at rich men's tables; and the only slander the Jews ever tried to fasten on Him was based on that total absence of ascetic severity which distinguished His life from that of His forerunner. Even His dress would seem to have been choice: His outer robe having been woven without seam throughout, thereby indicating a certain care for the body it invested—a consciousness of personal dignity. And yet it was the body of His humiliation that He treated with such respect. If Christ, then, did not disdain attending to His own person, and lavished care and attention on the persons of so many others; if almost all His mighty acts were acts effecting the relief of bodily ailments, or the removal of bodily defects; if the few miracles recorded as having been subsequently wrought by His apostles were all of the same character—except two miracles of punishment—are we not justified, on Christian principles, in claiming for the ministry of the body a high degree, not only of beneficence and usefulness, but even of sanctity? I know, indeed, no class of men since the time of Christ who more

completely tread in the path of Christ, so far as external action goes, however little they may intend so doing, than that class, that profession, who devote themselves to the cure or relief of bodily disease and suffering. The "Good Physician" would seem to have a peculiar and intimate relation, if they would but recognise it, with those who are endeavouring by natural means, often with great labour and fatigue, to do that which He at once effected by supernatural power and with perfect certainty, though not without a conscious efflux of virtue which would appear to have in some degree exhausted His sacred person. When, therefore, they are overcome by the toil incidental to their profession, or fall themselves victims of disease contracted in attending to the sick, let them recollect how St. Matthew applies to Christ in His function of miraculous healer the words of Isaiah, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses,"—words which certainly seem in this application to imply that each such case of healing was not an effortless act of sheer omnipotence, but involved fatigue, and even exhaustion, as well as sympathy. That medical men too seldom realise the ennobling likeness between their own duties and the activity

of Christ is their own great loss, inasmuch as they are thus deprived of a secret support, the benefit of which the more believing hearts among them will thankfully acknowledge.

No doubt the beneficence of Christ proceeded from higher motives than those which usually prompt the actions of sinful men, and had a higher object. His chief aim was to reach the hearts and souls of men through attending to their bodies as well as to substantiate His mission. Yet He never seems to have declined working a miracle, wherever there was sufficient trust to convert what would otherwise have been a mere act of overpowering omnipotence into an act of mutual human sympathy. And wherever good is done, though the motive be not the highest, Christ is virtually preached and God is virtually honoured, not with the homage of the lips but with the devotion of the life; and the man who *acknowledges* no higher motive than the wish to advance science or to benefit mankind in this life, subordinating both these motives very probably to the aim of gaining wealth or competence, does nevertheless imitate, unconsciously and distantly, the great Benefactor of our race.

But while fully recognising the Christlike char-

acter of the medical profession in itself, may I venture to suggest to its members a more direct and personal imitation of that noblest of all characters, a more purposed modelling of themselves on His example? And this may be done even by those who do not believe in His Divine commission. It was an unbeliever who said that probably no better method could be devised by any one of ruling his life aright than to ask himself, before each doubtful or decisive action, Would Christ, in the same circumstances, have done this? The character of Christ cannot be studied without imbibing something of His nature. And what a nature! Who was ever so delicate in His intercourse with others as was Christ? His deeds of kindness left no sting of inferiority in their recipients; He never *condescended*. Who was ever so full of sympathy as Christ? The material benefit was only half of what He conferred. Who was ever so void of self-assertiveness as Christ? While never yielding one atom of His dignity, He never forced it on men's notice; He made no clamorous assertion of it; His voice was not raised in the streets. Who was ever so perfectly truthful as Christ? Any kind of trickery, even the trickery of mannerism, one feels at once to be inconceivably

impossible in Him. Who ever cared less for wealth and position than did Christ? He spoke with equal authority to the lowest and the highest; He spared not the stern rebuke which the highest perhaps require oftener than the lowest. Cruelty, again, the unnecessary infliction of pain, one feels instinctively would have been unutterably abhorrent to our Saviour. And though we have no record of any word of His upon the subject, I defy any one who sets Christ before him to carry out, from whatever motive, the devilish principle of Spinoza that we are out of relation to the inferior animals, have therefore no duties to them, and may treat them as we please. The pursuit of science at the expense of humanity is surely inconsistent with the mind of Christ. What absolute purity, too, in the whole life and style of Christ! No ambiguous word ever escaped His lips; no breath of slander ever attainted Him there. All these, the last not least, are points on which the medical profession needs special warning, because it is necessarily brought into close contact with some of the most debasing sides and moods of human nature, and is tempted to treat them with levity or coarseness; because the very process of learning what must be known for useful-

ness is fraught with terrible danger to delicacy and purity. The very conception of humanity may be lowered by the attention being long fastened almost exclusively on its lowest functions. Unlike other mechanisms the human body can never be studied in all its perfection, for it begins to change and decompose the instant such study becomes possible. What in health was full of grace and dignity becomes loathsome and horrible in death, and disgust in many cases leads to brutal irreverence.

From all such temptations no better safeguard can be imagined than to steep the mind in the character and precepts of the Great Physician, the Physician who will reconstruct our frames on a nobler and more enduring type when He returns again in His majesty to judge the quick and dead and to renovate the universe.

During the Middle Ages, when matter and mind were supposed to be distinctively arrayed against each other, the study of anatomy was proscribed, and physiology became impossible. It is satisfactory to see that this attitude of the mediæval Church is now officially abandoned. But Christianity itself had long before consecrated medical studies by erecting at Rome the first hospital ever dedicated to the cure of the sick poor. This hospital, founded in the time,

perhaps partly under the influence, of St. Jerome, absorbed the wealth and leisure of two Roman ladies; and the religious benevolence of which it was the active expression perpetuates itself even still in the denomination "House or Palace of God," which is borne by the chief hospital in Paris.

But while we dedicate to the care of bodily disease energies which, especially in the domain of surgery, seem to have an almost illimitable future, it is well that we should at each moment recall to our minds the great truth that this world, and all it contains and promises, are essentially transitory and evanescent, and that our highest aspirations can only be realised in that hidden future state, in which the "adoption" shall be completed by the redemption of the body from all its present imperfections, and its transformation into a perfected organ of a perfected spirit. Nothing short of this can save us from the otherwise overwhelming consciousness of ultimate invariable failure, for the body must eventually decay, and the utmost skill can but procrastinate its catastrophe. But whilst things seen are temporal, the things that are not seen are eternal; and in the sure and certain hope of them we may defy disappointment and triumph in apparent defeat.

V

THE EARLIEST MISSIONS

Is there not a cause?—1 SAM. xvii. 29.

AS I am requested to appeal to you to-day on behalf of the oldest Missionary Society of our Church, or, indeed, of Protestantism in general, I have thought it might not be without advantage if I reviewed the missionary work of the earliest Church, especially as connected with a weighty argument for the truth of our religion. In aid of our inquiries, a late discovery in a library at Constantinople has brought to light a remarkable little book—a book which, though referred to by several of the early Fathers, had so completely disappeared that its ever having existed had been questioned by the sceptical spirit of the age. The book I allude to is called *The Teaching of Christ to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles*, and it purports to be

a manual of essential Christian doctrine, and a specification of Christian practice, so far as Christian worship and the dissemination of Christianity are concerned. The first of these it certainly is not, but it does throw great light on the early propagation of Christianity.

In conducting my argument, I must be allowed to avail myself of a well-known legal principle. This principle is, that "possession is nine points of the law." Now, *Christianity is in possession.* It is a great fact in the history of man. This must be taken into account by those who impugn its authority. Instead of being required to show that Christianity is true, I may reasonably challenge its adversaries to show that it is false. The burden of proof lies in reality with its assailants, not with its defenders.[1] And this most reasonable retort is all the more justified because Christianity has done a certain work in the history of man quite separate from the eternal hopes which it holds out; is doing a certain work at this very moment of the most beneficial kind. To what is the abolition of slavery in all civilised countries due? Unquestionably to Christianity. The men who in the last century

[1] See Note A.

fought out its abolition did so, not on the strength of mere morality, but on the ground of Christian principle. To what is the present high position of the female sex, on which depends the whole future of the human race, to be ascribed? Still more absolutely to Christianity, and to Christianity alone. We know what women were in the highest civilisation of antiquity, to what further degradation a philosopher like Plato would have consigned them, what they are at this day in all countries which are not Christian. What nations know anything of freedom and of the dignity which always accompanies freedom, and cannot be had without it? Only those where Christianity rules, or has ruled, even when its authority is now shaken in consequence of the corruptions of the Church. In whaf countries is the family a sacred and, therefore, a happy thing? In Christian countries only, if the family is taken in its ideal sense, though I grieve to say that there is one country, generally called Christian, though making no official profession of Christianity, no provision for its maintenance, where the laxity and inconsistency of the marriage laws threaten to destroy the very essence of family life.[1]

[1] The United States.

Do you think, in the face of these facts, that the world would be wiser and happier if Christianity were gone? that the loss of its assurances, of its sanctities, of its consolations, would make men better than they now are? that they would find stronger inducements to virtue, stronger deterrents from vice, in being certified that God, if indeed there be a God, cares nothing for them? that there is nothing to hope or fear beyond the grave? that death is an eternal sleep? You know the horrors that were enacted just a century ago by the men who set up that inscription over every burial-ground in France: do they encourage you to adopt their creed?

But to return to my thesis. Christianity is unquestionably a great fact in the history of the world, and in the development of the most advanced portions of the human race. It is a fact which must be accounted for as must all other facts; the mind of man is irresistibly driven, when it sees effects, to seek for causes. It came into existence quite suddenly within a very short space of time, within less than four years from the beginning of Christ's activity; it made its way in spite of its Founder having been put to an ignominious death; it made

its way in spite of all the prejudices of the races to which it was first presented, and which prejudices it assiduously flouted; for if it preached a Messiah to the Jews, it preached Him not as a triumphant conqueror, but as a crucified victim; if it preached immortality to the Greeks, it preached it not in the shape of the immortality of the soul, but in the shape of the resurrection of the body, which seemed to them absurd. It owed nothing to force, for its first preachers were poor, persecuted, powerless; it had everything to dread from force, for it never became a *religio licita* in the Roman Empire till it had actually more than half conquered that empire; during its first three hundred years it might at any moment be proceeded against with the almost despotic power vested in every proconsul and propretor. It went directly in the teeth of the ethics of the age, for it sternly forbade indulgences which everybody then thought perfectly allowable, and the outspoken and quite innocent mention of which in the classics of Greece and Rome constitutes the greatest danger connected with their study by the young. If it dwelt on the unity of God, a sublime idea familiar to the best heathen minds, it represented that unity as compatible with the associating

a human being with the Godhead, even in the very act of worship, and that human being a crucified malefactor. All these are difficulties which, the more they are reflected on, the more enormous do they appear, difficulties which certainly require all the more strength in the causes that overcame them.

When, therefore, we are glibly told that the triumph of Christianity was quite natural; that the whole affair, considered as a supernatural revelation, was a delusion, and that mankind are so prone to delusions that they were only too eager to embrace this strange system, so completely opposed to their prejudices, their passions, their philosophies, without any real ground whatever for it; and that not merely its first preachers, who can have had no motive for spreading it except that they believed it to be true, but thousands besides them and after them, were quite ready to face death in some of its most appalling forms, as well as the previous horrors of "the question," and all for a mere delusion;—when unbelievers expect us to swallow such a statement as being perfectly adequate to account for the existence of Christianity and the part it has played in history, it appears to me that they are counting on the credulity or the unreflectingness of

those whom they address, to a degree which is by no means complimentary. Like everything else, Christianity must have had a *cause*; and that cause must have been an *adequate* cause; and further, I must observe, that if its first preachers appealed to causes inadequate or even positively false, and which, being false, it would have been easy to show up as being false—*e.g.* miracles, said to have been performed all through Palestine in broad daylight and in the presence of great multitudes; but which miracles had never been performed at all,—they were simply making their own case desperate, and giving their cause bound hand and foot into the hands of its enemies, to be easily exposed and utterly destroyed. For there was abundance of intercourse between Palestine and the neighbouring countries where the Gospel was first preached; especially between Palestine and great commercial centres like Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome; and nothing would be easier than to inquire of persons who had recently come from Palestine whether the reports brought by the earliest preachers of Christianity concerning what Christ had done were true. These things "had not been done in a corner"; if they were true, they must have been notorious. If,

therefore, persons freshly arrived from Palestine proved, on inquiry, to know nothing about them, the falsehood of the apostles' statements concerning them would at once have been evident, and the whole system based on them would have been discredited.

And in connection with this, let me call your attention to a fact well known, but very imperfectly comprehended. It is the fact that, whereas at the very beginning of its career Christianity made thousands of converts from among the Jews, after the lapse of a century it entirely ceased to make converts from among them. In other words, that its Jewish converts were made at the time when the activity of Jesus was most recent, and, of course, freshest in people's recollection, and that Christianity ceased to make Jewish converts when the immediate recollection of Christ's activity had died out with the death of the generation that had seen Him. Now, had Christ's miracles—those mighty works on the strength of which He claimed obedience[1]—had they never been performed at all, this course of things ought to have been reversed. For the appeal

[1] Matt. xi. 4, 5. John ix. 3, 4; x. 32; xiv. 10, 11; xv. 24; xx. 30, 31.

to them would have been ruinous to His cause in the case of those who would have been sure to see them if they had been wrought, but who, on the infidel hypothesis, could not have seen them because they never had been wrought; whilst, on the other hand, subsequent generations might possibly have been induced to believe in Christ by false stories about Him which at that distance of time they could not disprove. But as the case stands, it is the *contemporaries* of Christ—those that knew most about Him—that are converted, while the Jews of the next and following generations, who knew least about Him, remain unconvinced. This circumstance is one of profound importance, turning, as it does, the subsequent unbelief of His nation into a most powerful argument for the truth of the facts which substantiated His mission.

And these considerations are very much strengthened by a comparison of Christianity with those other religions whose beginnings can be traced, and which may, therefore, be termed historical religions, and not mere mythologies. I mean Buddhism and Mohammedanism. The Buddha was engaged during more than forty years in preaching his religion. Mohammed was similarly

engaged during a period about half as long. Christ preached His religion *only for three years*. Nothing is more astonishing than the brevity of the time which yet sufficed to found the widest spread, the most influential, of all religions! Three years! Again, Buddhism was never persecuted: was, indeed, strongly supported by many Hindoo potentates; the Buddha died in peace in extreme old age of a surfeit of swine's flesh.[1] Mohammedanism never began to flourish till it grasped the sword: neither force nor favour were at the command of the Christian propaganda. Again, Buddhism is not really a religion; it is a philosophy, an *atheosophy*, which explains, in a way consistent with the ingrained pessimism of the Hindoo mind, our existence and our relations with the universe, and gives rules of life accordingly. It is not—it does not profess to be—a revelation; it is simply a supposed ethical or philosophical discovery, the product of meditation, which any one accepting pessimistic principles could make for himself: and being such, it rests on no basis of alleged facts, as Christianity does; and thus eludes that appeal to evidence which is absolutely vital or absolutely

[1] See *Buddhism*, by Sir M. Monier Williams, p. 49.

fatal to Christianity.[1] Mohammedanism, too, escapes the difficult, the desperate, appeal to evidence; for the only evidence of the truth of his mission Mohammed ever offered was the sublimity of the style of the Koran. It gained its converts by the grandeur of its simplicity, by its proclamation of the absolute unity of God: still more, by its proclamation of the absolute equality of all its converts —of the absolute superiority of its converts over the infidel, no matter how high his rank: thus constituting all Mussulmen into an aristocracy of peers, lording it over mankind by the sword. Thus it exactly coincided with the instincts of the warlike nomads of Arabia, and by the aid of kindred instincts in other savage tribes it still conquers and still enslaves. To compare such systems with Christianity, by way of illustrating the conquests of the latter, is an outrage upon history. Unlike both Buddhism and Mohammedanism, Christianity ran counter to the current of both the civilisations it first addressed. To the Jews the Cross was an offence; to the Greeks, to the whole of the then civilised world, it was folly. How then was this strange religion "floated"?—to use the slang of the

[1] See Monier Williams, p. 38, and *passim*.

Stock Exchange. How did the vessel ever get out of port? THIS is the question which the opponents of Christianity have to answer, and which they never yet have answered satisfactorily.

On the other hand, if the actions ascribed to Christ were actually done; if He really *did* go about Palestine "doing good," physically benefiting multitudes by the exercise of superhuman power; if He *did* rise from the dead; if He *did* send down on His tried disciples a marvellous power of spiritually influencing the minds of men; if their hopeless sorrow for His death was really "turned" suddenly "into joy"—a joy so great and so pervasive as to impress all that saw them with the irresistible conviction of the truth of what they declared they had beheld, and which had caused it,—why, *then*, indeed, the rapid diffusion, the astonishing success, of the religion they proclaimed is perfectly natural, quite to be expected. For strong conviction will make its way. The phenomenon of its success, inexplicable on the supposition that Christianity is false, is perfectly plain and adequately accounted for if it be true. I lay especial stress on this, because I think it is in itself enough to prove the truth of our religion. Its principles are so strange; so unwel-

come to the natural heart ; the wishes of that heart are either so contradicted or so *perversely* gratified by Christianity—gratified in such an ungratifying way ; the circumstances of the time were so adverse to its success, that the longer I reflect, the more do I feel that the incipient difficulty of inducing belief at all, unless what claimed belief were true, and widely known to be true, is insurmountable. Had Christianity not been true, it would never have been launched at all into a world which did not want it, which did not like it, and which, when forced to accept it, directly set about spoiling it as the next best thing to rejecting it altogether. For what are those corruptions of Christianity over which unbelievers like Gibbon gloat with so much relish—what are they but so many proofs how disagreeable to the human heart is Christianity in its first purity, and therefore how difficult it must have been to induce men to accept it at first when it was most pure ?

And here comes in what we may well call the *mechanism* of its earliest diffusion. On this the book of *The Teaching* has thrown a vivid light.[1] According to that book there were in the earliest

[1] See Note C.

Church four orders of ministers, just as we find four such orders mentioned in the Epistle to the Ephesians,[1] with which the book of *The Teaching* is probably contemporaneous. These orders were —Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, and Bishops and Deacons. Now, if we examine the statement of St. Peter, at the first convention of the Church, we find that the chief qualifications for taking the place of an apostle in the Sacred College of the Twelve was the having companied with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, and the having seen Him alive after death in His Resurrection body.[2] Just as St. Paul seems to rank the having seen the Lord as an indispensable qualification for an apostle. "Am not I an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?"[3] The first of these qualifications, the having companied with Christ during the three years of His earthly ministry, would be of extreme importance to those who, like the Twelve, were to bear witness to their Master's teaching, to hand it on, and to work it into the mind of His disciples when He should have left them. But the second qualification—the having beheld Him alive after His Resurrection—must

[1] Ephes. iv. 11.
[2] Acts i. 21, 22. Compare Acts iii. 15, and x. 40, 41.
[3] 1 Cor. ix. 1.

have fallen to the lot of many believers who had, nevertheless, not attended on Him throughout His whole ministry. No doubt numbers were favoured with the sight of their risen Lord, who had not accompanied Him during the whole of the memorable triennium. We are told by St. Paul that on one occasion he showed Himself to above five hundred brethren at once, most of whom, he adds, still survive,[1] a remark which proves that their names were well known, and probably recorded in the books of the Church. Now every one of these would be a witness to the fact of His Resurrection. What these five hundred had seen we cannot for a moment suppose they would not be eager to make known to others. To what purpose else had their Master displayed Himself alive to them? Was it in order that they might put their candle under a bushel, and not on the candlestick, where it might give light to them that were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death? Why were they made witnesses *of* His Resurrection, except that they might bear witness *to* His Resurrection? Accordingly, in the book of *The Teaching* we find a class of apostles described entirely distinct from the Sacred College of the

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 6. See Note B.

Twelve. The whole function of these second-class apostles is to go about from place to place proclaiming the great facts of Christianity, especially, of course, the Resurrection of its Founder. Except under the pressure of the extremest necessity they are never to spend more than a single day in any one place; if they stay three days they are to be deemed false prophets, and deprived of their ministry. This singular arrangement, while it reflects light on the Epistle to the Ephesians, explains the otherwise incomprehensibly rapid diffusion of Christianity throughout the eastern portion of the Roman Empire. For just reflect for a moment on the necessary effect of such a rapid and pervasive propaganda! Imagine these numerous witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, each starting on his great mission, proclaiming in every market-town, in every place of Jewish worship, in the precincts, very possibly, of many an idol-temple, "I have seen, I have myself seen, the Dead restored to life! I have seen Jesus declared to be the Son of God with power by His Resurrection! I have beheld Him, I have approached Him, I have clung to Him by His pierced feet, I have worshipped Him, I have heard Him utter the mighty words, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and earth;

go ye therefore and make all nations my disciples!' And it is in obedience to that omnipotent command that I am here addressing you!" Is it any wonder that such a message, delivered with all the fervour of the most absolute conviction by persons who derived no profit whatever from it, who refused to stay a moment longer than might be necessary to recruit their fatigue, and who seemed to have no other enjoyment, as they had no other occupation, than to spread the glad tidings as widely as possible, —is it any wonder if such a message so delivered should have made thousands on thousands of converts throughout those parts of the empire where this propaganda worked? And this is no fancy picture. In its essence it is the very task which Christ Himself had set to His disciples. They were not merely to *accept* the Gospel. They were to *proclaim* the Gospel. They were not merely to acknowledge Christ themselves, they were to bring others to acknowledge Him. For *this* it was requisite that they should abandon all other pursuits, and give themselves wholly to Christ. Hence the absolute sacrifice of all their worldly goods Christ demanded of all who should follow Him. It was not that the possession of property was wrong in

itself. Christ was no socialist. It was simply that the possession of property was not compatible with the great task which, by volunteering to become His disciples, they had undertaken: the task of accompanying Him during His earthly life, of proclaiming Him in His immortal existence after His withdrawal from this earth. And can we imagine that those who had abandoned all worldly interests for His sake would revert to them, would resume their worldly occupations as soon as their Lord's Resurrection had proved to them that He had claimed no more than He had a right to claim when He had required of them the abandonment of all worldly ties for His sake? And if they did not return to those secular pursuits, what else were they to do? what resource was left to them, unless to go about bearing their simple but most powerful witness to His Resurrection? Can we wonder that such a ministry, such an organisation, *floated* Christianity, and made it an instantaneous power in the Roman world? Nay, would anything short of such an organisation have sufficed to effect a change so vast in so short a time?[1]

The considerations through which I have con-

[1] See Note C.

ducted you are at once the explanation of Christianity and the justification of Christianity. They explain Christianity as being not a system of dogmas, not a theology, but a belief in a Person, the Divine Man, the second head of the human race, the introducer of a Divine and never-ending life into that race. They justify Christianity, because they show how entirely natural was its immense success if it were true, how entirely unnatural, or rather how impossible, would have been its success, had it been false. If the facts proclaimed by its first missionaries were true, if they had actually taken place, then the restless activity of those missionaries was quite to be expected; they could not help going about declaring to others the wonderful things of which they had been the eyewitnesses, and of which their resignation of all their secular employments had unfitted them for being aught else than the preachers. Had Christianity in its great facts been false; had Christ, like John the Baptist, done no miracles; had He gone down to the rock-hewn tomb a mere common corpse, never reanimated with the breath of life, never reappearing to cheer and inspire His followers, stolen, perhaps, out of the sepulchre by their

affection, but incapable of being galvanised into life by the pious theft, a useless, a discouraging, a dangerous burden ; had there been nothing to proclaim but a brief career of philanthropic vagabondage, cut short by a shameful death, leading no whither, and having no ulterior meaning ;—who can imagine that men, who must in that case have felt that they had been cheated out of their livelihood by the rash and unfounded pretensions of this dead enthusiast, would have gone about eagerly proclaiming what they must have known to be a miserable delusion, calling on men to accept a Saviour who could not save Himself ; a leader who had led no whither ; a teacher whose claims had been scouted by those who had the best right to examine and adjudicate upon them? The adversaries of Christianity appear to me to have no historic sense ; they cannot see the facts of the case ; at any rate, they do not grapple with those facts, but cheat themselves and their followers with vague and impotent generalities. The attractions of sympathy and fellowship, the delights of a brotherly union of congenial souls—such things as these will not enable men to endure horrible tortures and death itself. Nor will they induce the offspring of a sceptical age, an age of exhausted

reason and exhausted passion, like the first century of our era, to grasp at an idle tale, as the impugners of historic Christianity must maintain the Gospel history to be, and to persevere in believing it in spite of a universal social ban. Great effects demand adequate causes, as I said before; the attempts to trace back the enormous success of Christianity to causes so frivolous, so weak, so utterly inadequate, as those assigned by modern sceptics, only require being looked at to be at once found wanting. Nothing but the immense missionary activity of the earliest Church could have *floated* Christianity, and nothing but the most intense conviction of the great facts of Christianity, especially of the Resurrection of Christ, could have produced that immense activity.

The cause for which I plead to-day is in direct and obvious connection with the argument I have endeavoured to put before you. As the missionary activity of the earliest Church was the truest test of that Church's vigorous life, as well as the cause of its rapid expansion, so the state of any portion of the Church now may be accurately gauged by the amount of its missionary effort. What is the cause of the fatal lethargy of German Protestantism?

It is that activity has given way to speculation. Men theorise in Germany instead of acting. What is the cause of the utter deadness of the Romish Church in Spain? It is the utter absence of all missionary effort. No Gospel goes forth from that country into the dark places of the earth. Our own Church is but now reawakening to some consciousness of her duties in this regard. The great missionaries to whom it owed its foundation, and who extended Irish Christianity over Scotland and over Western Europe, Patrick, Columba, Columbanus, left no successors. Missions died out of the mediæval Irish Church, as they did out of the Church of England. *Now* there is a revival of missionary work on a large scale in England, on a small scale here. The sneers and scoffs of the wise of this world, loud and effective at the beginning of this century, have died out; the Gospel of Christ is again felt to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. Of the two agencies of Anglican Missions, the Society for which I plead to-day is the most ancient, and the most entirely expressive of the mind of the Church. But the other and younger Society is vigorous and effective too, and the mission-field requires them both. Let your contributions

this day, and your consistent support in future, show that you understand the obligations of the Church, and the tenure of her continuance. Only as long as she fulfils her Lord's last command, by going and making disciples of all nations, will she be able to rely on His last promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

NOTE A

This principle, viz. that the burden of proof rests with those who attack, not with those who defend, existing institutions, is valid in politics as well as in religion, and in both has been equally forgotten. In modern politics we are constantly met with the question, "What can you say in defence of this or that social arrangement?—of this or that established institution?" (an Established Church, for instance). The question ought rather to be, "What have you to say *against* it?" It cannot have come into existence without some adequate cause; does that cause no longer give reason for maintaining it?

The neglect of this very obvious principle strongly tends to *Nihilism*, which is merely the ultimate result of that impatience with existing institutions, and ardour for novelties, which characterise the present age.

NOTE B

The occasion on which our Lord appeared after His Resurrection to above five hundred brethren at once, is not distinctly specified. But we may be sure it was in Galilee, since only in Galilee could such a number of

disciples be collected (in Jerusalem there were only one hundred and twenty—Acts i. 15); and if it was in Galilee, it was most probably that described in the last verses of St. Matthew, although only the eleven apostles are actually mentioned. For there would be no reason to send the eleven into Galilee, if they were to be the only persons to whom He was to appear there. But Galilee was full of His disciples; insomuch that "a Galilean" had already become almost synonymous with a disciple of Christ (Matt. xxvi. 73; Mark xiv. 70; Luke xxii. 59). And the circumstance that Jesus "had appointed them" a certain mountain (Matt. xxviii. 16), where they should see Him, hints at a large number being convened to a place where they might be secure from intrusion, and where His appearance would be the more conspicuous.

NOTE C

The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles (διδαχὴ Κυρίου διὰ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) is the full title of a little book discovered about fifteen years ago in the Library of the Jerusalem Patriarchate at Constantinople, by Philotheus Bryennius, then Metropolitan of Serræ, now of Nicomedia. It was published for the first time at Constantinople in 1882, by the same most learned man, with copious critical apparatus and notes.

It is mentioned by several of the Fathers, notably by Eusebius of Cæsarea, by Athanasius, and, some centuries after him, by Nicephorus of Constantinople, whose notice

identifies the book, inasmuch as he specifies the number of lines in the manuscript of it.

It falls into two main divisions: the first is a description of the "Two Ways," the way of life and the way of death; these are altogether confined to morality; there is nothing of what would now be called Christian doctrine in this part of the treatise. The second part begins with a description of baptism, how it is to be administered; then come injunctions about fasting, and a text of the Lord's Prayer, almost identical with that in St. Matthew, and an injunction to use it thrice a day; then a description of the Eucharist, the order for celebrating it, beginning (which is remarkable) with the cup, accompanied with very brief prayers. Then come directions how the apostles and prophets are to be treated "according to the doctrine (δόγμα) of the Gospel." "Let every apostle coming to you be received as the Lord: but he shall not remain more than one day: in case of necessity, he may remain a second day; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes forth, let him receive nothing except some bread (sufficient to carry him on to the place where he puts up at night); if he ask for money, he is a false prophet." Then considerations concerning prophets; how they are not to be tempted (cross-questioned) nor criticised, for this is the irremissible sin. Not every one, however, speaking in spirit is a prophet, but only he who has the ways of the Lord (who imitates Christ in his walk and conversation). By this the false prophet and the true are to be recognised. The prophet who says, speaking apparently in the Spirit, Give me money or something else, is not to be listened to; but if he exhorts to give in the case of others who are in

want, he is not to be condemned by any one. Every true prophet, wishing to take up his residence with a Church, is worthy of his maintenance. So also is every true teacher. If you have no teacher or prophet to give to, give it to the poor. . . . Then come directions for the election of bishops and deacons "worthy of the Lord."

These particulars are not only of extreme interest in themselves, but they appear to me to show that the book is of much higher antiquity than Bryennius supposes. He places it somewhere between A.D. 120 and A.D. 160. I will now give my reasons for assigning it to a time not long, if at all, posterior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

1. The terms "apostles and prophets," which are employed of distinct and different sets of persons, could not be used of any person except, in the case of apostles, such as had actually seen the Lord (see 1 Cor. ix. 1); in the case of prophets, of such as had received the gift of prophecy by the laying on of the hands of the Twelve. There was an attempt to revive the gift of prophecy in the second century by Montanus and his followers; or rather, a pretence that it had been revived by them: but there is no trace in *The Teaching* of any warning against the fanaticism that engendered these pretences. The warning is simply against those who, possessing actual spiritual gifts, abused them for selfish purposes. So, too, the difference between apostles and bishops, which subsequent times often endeavoured to obliterate, by calling bishops successors of the apostles, or even giving them the name of apostles: this difference appears in all its fulness in *The Teaching*; the apostles being simply wandering preachers, going incessantly from place to place, and not

supported by the Church; while the bishops are to be elected by the Church as its resident overseers.

2. The fourfold ministry of *The Teaching* seems exactly the same as that described in Ephesians iv. 11: "He gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." In *The Teaching* we have apostles, prophets, teachers (chap. xiii.), bishops and deacons. Now this organisation could not exist except in the very earliest times; and the coincidence of the two statements, that of the Ephesians and that of *The Teaching*, seems to prove that they are nearly contemporaneous.

3. A third reason for a very high antiquity is the extreme simplicity of the ritual prescribed both for baptism and the Eucharist in *The Teaching*. Particularly does one expression indicate this. In the tenth chapter the completion of the Eucharist is indicated by the words, *μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἐμπλησθῆναι*, "after your being satiated or filled," an expression softened by the long subsequent Apostolic Constitutions, into *μετὰ δὲ τὴν μετάληψιν*, "after reception." Clearly the expression in *The Teaching* goes back to the time when the Lord's Supper was still administered as it was at Corinth in the time of St. Paul, in such a way that it was possible to eat and drink copiously, or even immoderately, at it. Such a word as "filled, sated," *ἐμπλησθῆναι*, would never be used of those who received only a morsel of bread and a few drops of wine. But we know that this earliest method of reception must have been soon abandoned, on account of the dangers of irreverence and excess connected with it: hence the expression in *The Teaching* indicates some period still within the limits of apostolic administration.

4. The circumstance that only bishops and deacons are mentioned in *The Teaching*, as in St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, takes us back to the time preceding the separation of the episcopate from the presbyterate, *i.e.* to the time preceding the death of the Apostle John.

Taking all these things together, I feel that I can with safety appeal to *The Teaching* as indicating the extent to which the vagrant preaching of those who had "seen the Lord," and were therefore apostles in the sense of the word as used by St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 1), was organised and accepted in the very earliest Church. And the very defectiveness, in a doctrinal point of view, of *The Teaching* points to an extremely ancient period, antecedent to the time when Christian doctrine (teaching) became Christian theology in the hands of the great apostles, Paul and John.

I have forgotten to call attention to one remarkable difference between the different classes of ministers mentioned in *The Teaching*. The apostles and prophets, as also the teachers, are simply accepted or rejected by the Churches according as their doctrine and their life agree or not with the teaching and life of Christ. They do not derive their authority from the people whom they address. But the bishops and deacons are elected by the Church.

This distinction is perfectly natural, if the first three classes, apostles, prophets, teachers, were sent out directly by Christ Himself or by the Twelve who wielded Christ's authority after He was taken up. But it is not natural nor indeed intelligible, if the first three classes had been elected by the Churches, as the bishops and deacons were.

Though *The Teaching* cannot be regarded as having enjoyed actual authority as a manual of instruction and of practice, it must have expressed the mind of the early Church to a great extent, to judge from the respect with which it is treated by Eusebius and Athanasius; the latter recommending it to catechumens, and classing it with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which we know was often read in churches. Now this respect it could not have enjoyed had it depicted a state of things which never existed.

VI

THE LIMITS OF CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE

For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. — HEB. ii. 10; v. 8.

"THAT which hath been is that which shall be, and that which hath been done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun."

This is the dictum of a man who certainly lived not less than two thousand years ago, and so far as the flux and reflux of thought and opinion goes, and the varieties of action which depend thereon, it is as true now as when the Preacher wrote it. For discoveries are confined to science, and its applications

to those branches of knowledge which, though not strictly scientific, are yet akin to science. But moral or mental discoveries there are none. Metaphysics is a weary round of undemonstrable thought, which makes no advance; and in morality we are not beyond the eternal morality of the New Testament. We can call brotherly love altruism if we please, but we do not thereby alter its nature.

I make these remarks by way of introduction to an outline of the history of certain aberrations of opinion in the early Church, which I conceive may be of use for the understanding and answering of some difficulties recently raised against Christianity, because these difficulties are due to similar aberrations of opinion extensively, but unconsciously, entertained in our own days.

The doctrine of the Person of our Saviour is logically anterior to the doctrine of His work. The Incarnation precedes the Atonement, and the Atonement without the Incarnation is unintelligible. It is no wonder that the doctrine which lies at the root of Christianity should be mysterious and liable to misconstruction. On the other hand, if misconstrued, it cannot but involve in misconstruction everything dependent on it. The true conception

of the union between the divine and human in the Person of our blessed Lord involves of necessity the assertion of both these natures in their perfection. Yet one portion of our Lord's existence may seem incompatible with this double perfection. My texts hint a truth which has been too frequently forgotten. "The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering." In that case He was not perfect before He suffered. "Though a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things he suffered." It would seem that Christ had to learn something during His abode on earth. Whether it was a theoretic truth or a practical morality flowing from that truth, or both, something He had to learn.

For a considerable time the Church hardly thought of these mysteries. The ascertainment of our Lord's proper Deity in the fourth century, at the great Synod of Nicæa, and the long struggle with Arianism that followed it, had left a kind of exhaustion in the Christian consciousness. Satisfied with the declaration that the Son was of one substance or essence with the Father, and having applied to Christ by anticipation the whole fulness of the words used by St. John concerning the creative function of the *Logos*, or Word of God

(an anticipation justified by St. John's speaking of Christ as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world), the Church for some time made no effort to define the mode of union of the two natures in our Lord. This union is implied in her solemn declaration that the Lord Jesus Christ in His divine capacity the only begotten Son, begotten before all worlds, of one substance with the Father, and by whom all things were made, was, nevertheless, in His human capacity made man at a definite period in the history of the world, being Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary. The two natures, the eternal Godhead and the non-eternal Manhood, were placed side by side, their union asserted, but the nature and conditions of that union unexamined; and the anticipating language of the creed, predicating of Christ the action ascribed by St. John to the *Logos* or word that dwelt in Christ, might easily lend itself to mistakes fatal to the complex character and work of Christ.

Accordingly, after an interval of rest from exhausting thought, mistakes of this kind made their appearance with the revival of speculation. On the one hand arose a sect which, in their

anxiety to vindicate the reality of Christ's human nature, seemed to deny the reality of the Incarnation, some of its crudest advocates maintaining that the Deity was not united to the Humanity at the moment of conception, but only subsequently, either when the Saviour was born or when the Holy Ghost descended on Jesus at His baptism. On the other hand, another sect sprang up which, in its zeal to assert the proper and indefeasible divinity of Christ, maintained that the divine nature in the Saviour so superseded the human nature, either by substitution or absorption, that in Christ there was really no human nature at all, except the nature of a human body, the human soul being supplanted by the Godhead, so that no proper human character was left. The former of these heresies imperilled the efficacy of the atonement and the permanence of Christ's mediatorship. The latter under the pretext or even with the wish of honouring Christ, deprived His life and acts of all reality, annihilated both the temptation in the wilderness and the temptation on the Cross, destroyed Christ's sympathy with man, and consequently the reality of His mediatorial function. For, if Christ were only God, He could not be a

Mediator between Man and God. Nor, if He were only God, could His life be any example to us, since it would have no human element.

The struggle between these opposing heresies convulsed the Church during the fifth and following centuries. The first of them we may dismiss from our present consideration, as it soon lost its influence in the Church within the Roman Empire, though in modern times the tendency that led to it came to the front again in what its adherents call Unitarianism—a term to which they have no right, inasmuch as it implies that *they* alone believe in the Unity of God who deny the Deity of Christ. But the second of these two heresies, which received the name of Monophysite, from two Greek words denoting singleness of nature, because it asserted that there was only one single nature in the person of our Lord,—this heresy, I say, is still actively, though furtively, at work in Christendom, and is becoming dangerous in two ways: first, as impeaching the reality of Christ's work, and destroying the comfort we ought to have in Him as our sympathising Saviour; secondly, as begetting attacks on Christianity which, from its standpoint, it is impossible to meet.

I shall consider these two mischievous effects of Monophysitism separately, though it will soon be perceived that they dovetail into each other.

1. If Christ be merely God, taking indeed the shape of man, but not man's whole nature, then all human feeling in Christ is at once annihilated. He can have no fellow-feeling with our temptations, for, if merely God, He could not be really tempted. The whole scene in the wilderness becomes at once unreal—a mere piece of acting, by which we are to suppose the devil was deceived as much as they to whom the transaction was reported. The stress and pressure of trial and sorrow could not have been felt by one who was simply God dressed out in human shape; and, therefore, all that most precious representation in the Epistle to the Hebrews, of which millions on millions have experienced the comfort, the exquisite conception of the great High Priest, who can indeed be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as we are, only without sin, must be abandoned; it is absolutely and radically false. Of course, too, the idea of Christ having learned obedience, or anything else indeed, through suffering, must likewise be abandoned, if

He be mere God. For God can have nothing to learn. The words of St. Luke, that "Jesus grew in *wisdom* as well as in stature and in *favour* with *God* and men," are also in that case untrue. If the one sole nature of Deity occupied the child as well as the man, there could have been no growth in wisdom, whatever there might have been in stature, nor any growth in favour with God at least. The displays of human feeling which are so frequently recorded of our blessed Lord were likewise in that case mere acting. When He looked round with indignation, being grieved at the hardness of His hearers' hearts, the indignation and the grief were alike simulated, for the Deity can have no passions. When He burst into tears at the sight of the doomed city whose overthrow He had vainly endeavoured to avert, it was acting. When He wept at the grave of Lazarus, it was acting. So does the heresy which pretends to honour Christ most offer Him the foulest indignity, representing Him as practising a long series of deceptions on the unwary simplicity of His disciples. Nay, even on the Cross it does not cease blaspheming Him who, on its principles, could be no real sufferer, could never have felt forsaken by His heavenly

Father, could never be properly said to have overcome the bitterness of a death which to Him, as mere God, could have had no bitterness.

It can hardly be necessary to enforce on you the necessity of standing aloof from such a doctrine as this. When thus presented in its naked simplicity and unavoidable results, it can have no attractions for any sincere and devout Christian. And its deadening influence may be seen in the history of the nations that have adopted it. The Coptic and Abyssinian Churches, where it has reigned ever since the middle of the fifth century, are proverbial for their entire lack of spiritual life. Nay, they have even brought social barbarism on their unhappy members. Egypt and Abyssinia welcomed the Saracen invader in the seventh century, and chose to submit to the followers of Mohammed, when they might, by a patriotic resistance, have saved themselves to Christendom and the empire which was then the chief bulwark of Christendom; and ever since the Christians in those countries have been lost to all higher civilisation, and sunk in abject slavery. They have done nothing for the Christ whom they fancy they alone duly honour; they have wrecked Christianity in their hatred of orthodoxy.

Such have been the fatal results of the system which denies to Christ all real participation in our nature. We probably feel as if there were not the slightest danger of ourselves incurring similar disasters. But there is, I fear, even amongst ourselves, a good deal of unconscious Monophysitism. The denial of Christ's true human nature may not be formulated in so many words—may, indeed, be rejected as something strange and horrible when put into so many words, and yet may be there all the while lurking in the secret recesses of our hearts. Would any one in this congregation have dared to conceive of Christ as "learning obedience" through His sufferings had he not been told so in Scripture? Does not the phrase sound exceedingly startling? Should we have ever dreamed of Christ "being perfected through sufferings" supposing we had not the direct warrant of Scripture for the thought? When St. Paul tells us that we are to set Christ before us as our pattern in His humiliation, and when he then describes that humiliation in terms which the translators of our Authorised Version apparently could not quite understand, or from the full meaning of which they shrank—for they only tell us that Christ Jesus made Himself of no reputa-

tion, whereas what Paul tells in his forcible Greek is that Christ *emptied* Himself, that He resigned every divine prerogative that would have been inconsistent with His fully sharing all the limitations of human existence in itself, all the sinless infirmities and imperfections of our present state,—when Paul tells us this, and when our Lord Himself corroborates Paul by assuring us that of the times and seasons He knows nothing; that He had emptied Himself of the knowledge of them, which, as mere God, He must have possessed; when He shows that on points of natural philosophy He was not beyond the level of His age, inasmuch as He speaks as though salt could lose its savour, which we know it cannot do, are we not too generally inclined to shrink from these results, though they are simply the necessary consequences of an Incarnation such as that in which we believe, an Incarnation which does not sink the human in the divine?

Christ could, indeed, read men's hearts, and knew by instinct what was passing in them. He had in fullest measure that intuitive power which all great men have possessed in some degree. He could say of one, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," and justify His judgment by an appeal to

what had passed in His sight under the fig-tree. Nay, He even read the life of the woman of Samaria in the thoughts that coursed through her mind when He told her to fetch her husband. But every one must feel what a difference there is between this knowledge of the hearts of those with whom He had to deal and with whom He was brought into personal contact, and a knowledge of the events of the past history of the world beyond what the documents available in His time could give. Had any moral or religious purpose been subserved by the correcting of those documents, we may presume it would have been made known to Him, just as the abrogation of the ancient law of revenge, of the ancient law of divorce, of the traditional permission to hate one's enemies, was part of His commission. But what moral or religious end was to be gained by informing the Jews of His day that the deluge was partial, not universal, when the only purpose for which He incidentally alluded to it was to emphasise, by its suddenness, the warning He was impressing on His hearers of the suddenness of His own return to judge them? Was He to have wasted His time, and to have shocked their prepossessions by anticipating the results (if,

indeed, they are the results) of modern geological research?

2. And this naturally leads to the second part of the subject I have undertaken to bring before you. Attacks are now being continually made on the authority of our Lord, based on exactly such misconceptions of His nature and of His mission as I have noticed. Christ could not have been God, because, if God, He must have been omniscient, and therefore could have not been liable to mistakes or misconceptions on any subject. He speaks of the deluge as a fact in the history of man, whereas science, we are now informed, assures us that no universal deluge ever took place, the whole story of the deluge being merely an exaggerated tradition of some partial inundation in the valley of the Euphrates. But our Lord never asserts that the deluge was universal, and a partial deluge will afford exactly the same useful warning as a universal one. Again, Christ assigns certain Psalms to David, which some modern critics ascribe to an era long subsequent to David. I may claim some right to speak on this point with the authority of one who has studied the original text, and I must say that I entirely agree with the greatest Hebrew scholar of

this century, Ewald, when he declares of the 110th Psalm, which is the only one in which anything material turns upon the authorship, that it cannot have been written by any one but David. The character of its language is decisive of its antiquity. To ascribe it to the times after the Babylonian captivity, as some modern critics do, is as great an anachronism as to ascribe Chaucer's poetry to the age of Milton. And these are representative instances of the charge of ignorance brought against our Lord, and which is to dispose at once of His Divinity and of His mission. A third instance is His ignorance of the date of the Mosaic legislation. Ingenious theories have of late been broached to the intent that the Pentateuch is not merely a composite work, which no critic now denies, but that its greater part is of late authorship. One of its books, the book of Deuteronomy, was written centuries after Moses, and yet speaks in the name of Moses, and this at once stamps it as a forgery, and deprives it of all authority. Now, as our Lord evidently refers to it as if it were authoritative, He cannot have known what modern criticism has discovered, and, therefore, cannot be God, nor even a messenger sent by God. But whether Deuteronomy in its

present shape was written 1600 or only 600 years before Christ came matters very little, if the predictions it contains have been fulfilled. And no one who reads them, or the predictions in Leviticus, which denounce God's wrath on disobedience, can deny that they have been fulfilled in the history of the chosen people. It matters little by whom the book was written, so that the book be true. Whether the Pentateuch in its present shape was compiled by Moses or by some editor centuries after, there can be no doubt that it does contain substantially the legislation by which Moses created a nation, and sundered it for ever from all others. No subsequent origin would have produced that unique effect. The unfaltering tradition of an Oriental race, corroborated by the tenacity with which it has for 2500 years clung to the law which is at the root of that tradition, still more, the extraordinary fact that every denunciation and menace contained in the book of the law has been literally fulfilled; the present existence of the nation, dispersed over all the world, and yet remaining as distinct as ever from the nations amidst which it moves without mingling with them—these things are proofs of the substantial truth and of

the authority of the Hebrew sacred books, which no criticism can invalidate.

But, apart from the question of the general historic accuracy of the Pentateuch, our Lord's divinity and mission cannot be impeached by any defects of His human knowledge during the period of His humiliation. This principle is virtually acknowledged by St. Paul, not merely in the well-known words I have quoted from his Epistle to the Philippians, but in a remarkable passage of his second Epistle to the Corinthians: "Even if we have known Christ himself after the flesh"—if we have been personally acquainted with Him whilst He was on earth in the days of His weakness (as possibly some of the Jewish Christians who visited Corinth may have been, and have grounded a claim of superiority on this merely mundane acquaintance), "yet now we know him so no more." Why, except because during His earthly sojourn He was still imperfect, and could not be the omnipotent and omniscient Ruler and Providence of His Church which He became after His resurrection. The crass objections against Christianity which have lately been paraded in one of the monthly magazines with such an air of triumph are simply due to

ignorance of what Christianity really is; it is coarseness of mental fibre rather than any passion for mental clearness that has produced them, and they only evince incapacity of dealing with a subject that requires humility of mind and delicacy of thought. It is a very curious and impressive warning against the drift of modern opinion in matters of education, which is the substitution of natural for mental science, that Darwin's absorption in natural science had made him incapable of enjoying poetry; that having appreciated Shakespeare in his youth, he had lost all relish for him in his old age. His mind had become warped and contracted by the contraction of his studies. But Christianity has nothing to fear from assaults originating in narrowed views and imperfect training; it may possibly be extinguished in the bosoms of those who have not received what is most fittingly denominated a liberal education, of those to whom the phenomenal world is everything and the mental world is nothing; but there will always be a remnant who will not be content with such a miserable travesty of education as some modern "scientists" would force upon us, and whilst such a remnant shall exist, religion will be safe.

Let me sum up. To use Christ's authority as

decisive on matters of science, or history, or criticism, as has been lately done by a great English preacher; or to use supposed discoveries in science, or history, or criticism, for the purpose of discrediting Christ's authority, as a populariser of science has lately done, is to entirely misconceive the purpose for which Christ came; and further, it is to misapprehend or deny the doctrine of the Church regarding His dual nature. If He grew in wisdom as well as stature, then His wisdom must at one time of His life have been imperfect. The omniscience which belongs to the Second Person of the Trinity taken by Himself, He laid aside when He took flesh in the Virgin's womb. Nor can we specify any era of His life on earth previous to His resurrection at which that omniscience can be supposed to have reverted to Him—any era until He was again glorified by His Father with the glory which He had with Him before the world was. An era is, indeed, fixed by St. Paul in a remarkable passage of his Epistle to the Colossians, at which our Lord "stripped off from Himself" (in the phrase of the original) the influence of the principalities and powers of evil, and for ever discarded the liability to all further temptation and to all further suffering.

This was done when He triumphed on the Cross. But till that time, and the glory that followed His resurrection and ascension, and which so transfigured His body that St. John, beholding it in vision, fell down as one dead before its awful splendour—till that time our Saviour was in the state of humiliation, and one part of that humiliation consisted in His having emptied Himself of every divine prerogative inconsistent with the limitations of mind as well as of body which pertain to our present earthly state. This is the doctrine of the Incarnation, a great and inscrutable mystery; yet, perhaps, a mystery not greater than that of the union of the rational with the animal in man, and of the limitations imposed by the animal upon the rational in man. On all sides we are encompassed by mysteries; they cannot be got rid of by the coarse expedient of denying them. Our Lord came to teach, not geology, nor zoology, nor criticism, nor history; not to decipher cuneiform inscriptions, or explain hieroglyphics; not to give us, in a word, any information which we could well gain by our unaided faculties, but truths which no natural faculty of ours could discover. He came, not to deliver scientific lectures upon the deluge, or critical disquisitions on the Pentateuch or

Psalter, but to tell us the mind of God, in doing which He never shrank from contradicting the Mosaic legislation when that legislation was obsolete. And His incidental allusions to Jewish history and literature were no more intended to vouch for that history in all its particulars than our own use of inaccurate phraseology, when we speak of the rising and setting of the sun, is intended to declare that we believe in the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. So, again, nothing whatever depends on the question whether the book of Jonah be a history or an apologue; nor on the question whether Job was a real personage or a typical representation of severe temptation, aggravated by the narrow theology of his time, as embodied in the three friends who fancied they were defending God by their envenomed accusations of His servant. Whether the doctrine be taught by fact or by fiction, it is the same in either case. The resurrection of the Saviour is as much foreshadowed by the apologue as by the history of Jonah. The sudden outburst, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," is equally full of comfort and instruction, whether the poem, of which it forms the climax, be a product of inspired and speculative imagination, or whether it is based on actual facts

in the life of some old Arab chief. Jesus was not a mere man. How, indeed, He could have ever been conceived as such passes my comprehension. But neither was He mere God, an idea which deprives His life of all meaning, and turns the Gospel into an acted lie. His knowledge of external things must have been gradually acquired by such methods as are open to men in general. The Spirit which was poured on Him at His baptism is in itself a declaration that He was man with human needs, for as God He would not have needed its descent, and that Spirit was not the Spirit of anticipated scientific discovery or critical research — anachronisms that would only have thrown difficulties in His way, and probably wrecked His mission with a generation wholly unripe for such disclosures,—but the spirit of wisdom and holiness, of absolute surrender to the will of His heavenly Father, of absolute coincidence with the mind of God ; and therefore we are not to seek in His utterances authoritative decisions on moot points of history and criticism, but eternal principles of action. He pierced at once to the real drift, the eternal significance of the legislation, the poetry, the philosophy, the history of the Old Testament,

but the outer shell, the husk in which that kernel of divine instruction was lodged, it was not His province to investigate; nor may we, therefore, either forbid or bias investigation and research into the nature and texture of the Old Testament by quoting an authority which has no relevancy to such questions, and was never meant to touch them. For sound doctrine as to Christ's dual nature is valuable, not merely because it secures Christ's real authority from pseudo-scientific attacks; it is quite as valuable because it guarantees to the true votaries of science and of history the free and uncensured exercise of those faculties which God hath given them. True science and true religion can never be enemies. But when science is shackled in the supposed interests of religion, as it was two centuries ago in Roman Catholic countries, or when science is biassed, as in some cases it certainly has been, by the attempt to employ it against religion; when we find on one side a ban laid by theology on science, as though the knowledge of God's works were inconsistent with sincere acceptance of God's will; or, on the other hand, when we find a scientific investigator exulting in his supposed discoveries being used as an engine to overthrow Christianity,

we must keep carefully aloof from either tendency. *For either tendency will falsify science on the one hand, or religion on the other.* Which of the two—false theology or false science, is most to be deprecated it is difficult to say, though in these days false science is, perhaps, the most mischievous. The men who pursue science, or what is popularly called such, in a spirit of hostility to religion can hardly be trusted as to the conclusions they arrive at, or the discoveries they suppose themselves to make. They are possessed by exactly the same spirit which animated the Inquisitors who persecuted Galileo. It is well for them and us that they neither are likely to be persecuted as Galileo was, nor have the power to persecute which the Inquisitors enjoyed.

Let us, then, avoid the coarse mistakes in which ancient heretics and modern "scientists" agree; and whilst we commemorate the sufferings by which our Saviour was perfected, let us in heart and mind ascend with Him into that heaven of heavens where He now sits enthroned at the right hand of God, our eternal Mediator and Intercessor, to whom "all power has been given in heaven and earth," and who, when He comes again, will appear without sin and suffering unto salvation.

VII

CATHEDRAL WORSHIP

Worship the Lord in holy array.
Ps. xxix. 2 (R.V.)

I INTEND applying these words to that worship of our Lord and God which we offer more particularly in our churches, and most elaborately in our cathedrals, where Christian worship ought to find its highest type. And I shall treat this subject historically, tracing the public worship of the Church from its first rude beginnings, as we find they are alluded to rather than described in the New Testament, to that stately form in which we find it at present in the purest churches on earth.

How the injunction to "worship the Lord in holy array" was carried out among the Jews we are told at large in the historical books of the Old Testament. The Jewish temple service was an

elaborate and costly fulfilment of it. Nor is anything more evident than the regulated and impressive order of its conduct. The 68th Psalm describes the grand procession which climbed the Temple Mount after a great victory: "They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, into the sanctuary. The singers went before, the minstrels followed after, in the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels." Responsive singing created the very form of many of the Psalms; two choirs, answering each other in alternate verses, or sometimes, perhaps, as I am inclined to think was done in chanting the 136th Psalm, a single voice of surpassing power and brilliance recounting the successive mighty acts of God, and the whole multitude of singers then falling in with the refrain, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

These splendours of worship, though they were not disapproved, could not be imitated by the early Church. *For the early Church had no churches.* Bread was broken, the Lord's Supper, *i.e.* was celebrated, in apostolic times from house to house. For Christianity was not a *permitted* religion, and therefore could have no buildings dedicated to its use. Accordingly, in the letters of St. Paul we often

hear of the church in this or that believer's house; meaning, not the family of the owner of the house, but the body of Christians who usually met for worship in it. More than two centuries elapsed before the Church in each great town had a place where to lay her head—an edifice devoted to her worship.

The necessary consequence of this state of things was the *morcellement*, the morselling, or dividing of the one Church in each great town into a number of small conventicles, each of them not too numerous to be accommodated in some one private mansion. The natural consequence of this subdivision might have been the destruction of the Church's local unity. The master of each house in which such a subdivision of the whole Church met, might too readily have come to exercise an undue influence over those whom he thus accommodated. The obligations of the Church towards him might easily have begotten an undue deference to his opinions. His peculiarities, his partialities, his incomplete conceptions, might have dominated the little band of believers whom he received under his roof. And thus in every great city the multiplicity of small conventicles, inevitable under the circumstances, might have produced a

multiplicity of types of doctrine in the one Church, which in her oneness could never meet together, having no one edifice in which it was possible for all to find room.

This danger was met by the institution of episcopacy. In each town there was to be henceforth but one bishop, who should impersonate the entire Church, and by his occasional presence in now one, and now another of the conventicles into which it was necessarily subdivided, preserve that unity of teaching and of action which was essential to the spread and triumph of the Gospel.

This special function of the bishop explains many passages in the letters of the martyred Ignatius which have been sadly misunderstood. "Whereso-ever the bishop appears, there let the laity attend," —an injunction idle, nay, unintelligible, if there had been one great central Church in every city, in his time, as subsequently, where the bishop always officiated. "Let that be deemed a valid Eucharist which is administered by the bishop, or whomsoever he shall delegate,"—an injunction quite as unnecessary when, as subsequently, there was one great Church, in which the Eucharist was always administered by the bishop himself; but most necessary when it was

celebrated in dozens of private houses to small gatherings, where, but for the bishop's control, strange and improper methods of administration might easily have crept in. If the Church was saved from sectarianism and schism in the earliest age, she owes it to the inspired resolve of the apostles that in each town one bishop should be appointed, "the angel of the Church" in the Apocalypse, who should preserve the unity of doctrine and discipline, and save each Church from being shattered into a number of semi-dissenting congregations. By bringing each separate conventicle under the informing and regulating sway of one central mind, divisions like those which harassed the Corinthian Church were avoided; and united, and consequently efficacious, action in the whole body of the faithful in each great centre was secured.[1]

The worship at first was no doubt of the simplest kind, but it contained every element of that which is now used. A hymn was sung to Christ as God; the oath of obedience to the commands of God and Christ was renewed; "the memoirs of the

[1] This view had the approbation of the late Bishop Lightfoot, to whom it was communicated by the author.

apostles," as Justin calls the Gospels, the records of the ancient Prophets, were read out in due measure; an exhortation based on them was delivered to the faithful; general prayers were offered up; then bread and wine, the latter mixed with water, were brought in, and the bishop or other presiding minister offered prayer and thanksgiving "to the best of his ability," the people assenting with their Amen; on which the elements, thus consecrated, were distributed to the congregation by the attendant presbyters and deacons. All persons present who had been baptized partook; not till the fourth century is there a trace of non-communicating attendance; any one who, having been baptized and confirmed, should have remained in the assembly, and yet declined partaking, would have been formally excommunicated, according to an ancient canon;[1] for the Lord's Supper had not been as yet turned from a meal to be partaken of into a sacrifice to be gazed at. The origin of this abuse we may trace up to the prevalence of Arianism in the Eastern Church. The faithful were naturally reluctant to receive their Lord's body and blood from the hands of men who did not believe in His divinity, and thus the sim-

[1] Of the Synod of Antioch, 341 A.D.

plicity of early practice became corrupted by the mischievous influence of heresy, and the very character of one of the two Sacraments was materially altered.

Long previous to this time, however, the religion of Christ had become connived at, if not formally recognised, by the secular power, and buildings expressly devoted to Christian worship were allowed to be erected. The model generally adopted for these edifices is remarkable. It was not the Jewish temple; it was not the Jewish synagogue; it was the pagan court of law, the basilica, in which the pro-consul or pro-prætor sate in judgment on criminals or decided civil suits.

The basilica, or "royal house," as these buildings were denominated, was almost invariably an oblong structure, with a semicircular ending called an apse. In the middle of this apse sate the prætor, with his attendants and assessors ranged on either side, the parties in the suit or the persons accused standing before him, while the body of the hall was open to those who might feel interested in the proceedings. Costly mosaics usually decorated the pavement on which the prætor's chair was placed. In such a tribunal, on such a tesselated pavement,

sate Pilate when Jesus was arraigned before him, sate Gallio at Corinth when Paul was dragged by the seditious Jews to his judgment seat. One might have fancied that such associations would have effectually prevented the adoption of the basilica as the type and model of the edifice in which the Church founded by Christ and taught by Paul should hold her meetings; yet so it is; the earliest Church was not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of" sentimentalism, and the convenience of the model prevailed over all other considerations. The bishop's throne took the place of the prætor's chair; the presbyters succeeded to the position, and even to the function of the prætor's assessors; whilst the deacons stood reverently before them, to receive their directions, and assist them in the various conduct of the service. In front of the bishop, in the centre of the apse, not against its end wall, was set the holy table; the congregation, standing, occupied the body of the hall; whilst the choir, so soon as choral singing was introduced, were ranged on either side, outside the apse. Later on, transepts were often added, and thus the building, when filled by the assembled Church, expressed the sacred form of her Redeemer as nailed upon the cross; the Church, in

full session, the mystical body of Christ, assumed the shape of His material body in the act of crucifixion. That our present system of cathedral worship has handed itself down in all material points from the hoar antiquity I have been describing is obvious ; yet there are one or two differences which I must not omit to notice.

1. In Justin's description two kinds of prayer present themselves — the united and consonant prayers offered by the whole assembly after the reading of Holy Scripture and the minister's address, and the solitary prayer offered up by the chief minister alone in consecrating the sacred symbols. The first of these must have been a settled form ; the latter would seem to have been extemporary, for Justin speaks of the president's offering up prayers and thanksgivings "according to his ability." But the introduction of heretical opinions concerning the Person and the work of the Redeemer would soon make it desirable, nay, indispensable, that this important prayer, connected with the most august and solemn rite of the Church, should not be left entirely to the discretion of the minister ; and, accordingly, about the middle of the third century, there can be no doubt that this prayer, if not the whole of the

communion office, was reduced to a set form, varying in different churches probably, but certainly varying within narrow limits. Even so far back as the apostles' times, the curious book lately rediscovered at Constantinople, and called the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, prescribes a set form for the consecration of the bread and wine, though it allows prophets to vary from it on the ground that they are inspired.

2. In the earliest Church singing seems to have been universal, the whole assembly joining; only subsequently did the voices of a trained choir aid, and then gradually supersede, the voices of the multitude. This absolute silencing of the great congregation I cannot but regard as a deterioration; but I am thankful that in most of our cathedrals the earlier practice is being gradually restored. Though the chanting of the Psalms and the canticles, and the still more elaborate anthem, cannot be shared by the general congregation, hymns are now being everywhere introduced, in which all that have voice and ear can join; and thus the more cultivated and artistic music of the cathedral service is associated with the simpler but not less impressive singing of the congregation restored to their primitive

privilege in the common worship of our common Lord.

3. The introduction of musical instruments, especially of that king of instruments the organ, is of later growth, and not universal. In the Eastern Church it has never taken place. But it is absolutely necessary if the whole congregation are to sing, and of its lawfulness there can be no reasonable doubt. Musical instruments were actually prescribed in the Jewish ritual, and it is strange that those Christians who most insist on the authority of the Old Testament should discard it utterly on this single point. But, on the other hand, the introduction of the organ gives tremendous power into the hands of the organist. He occupies a place only second to that of the minister in its influence, and if he be not conscious of his influence, or if he use it improperly, for the mere purpose of "showing off," he may effectually ruin the devotion of the congregation. The introduction into public worship of operatic airs or light and secular melodies may please the flippant and gratify the taste of those who come to church rather for pleasure than for profit; but it will degrade the worship of the Most High, and must jar on the feelings of all who have

any sense of the awful seriousness of that which is transacted in His holy temple.

That prayers should be sung in cathedral worship will not seem strange or improper to any one who recollects that hymns are or should be prayers; and that the Psalms are all prayers, most of them originally set to music, as appears from many of their superscriptions. If no other object be attained by this arrangement, this one at least is: the prayers are secured from the abuse of being muttered in an undertone, intended to be inaudible. When this abuse prevails, and when the prayers are also couched in a language not generally understood, as in the Romish Church, the service, which ought to unite the hearts and intelligence of all, becomes the function of the priest and his assistants only, the general congregation being engaged with private devotions of their own, which have nothing to do with what ought to be the united worship of the Church.

But as music is the special and characteristic "difference" of cathedral worship, it is fitting that its claims as an instrument of worship should be thoroughly understood. Music, then, is the only fine art the practice of which is used in Scripture to give some idea of the employments of the blessed

in heaven. And this naturally; for it is the only fine art the practice of which unites great numbers in one common act.

Painting is the work of an individual, and each picture can be enjoyed only by a very small number of persons, and that only at one place. Architecture, though its productions may be used and enjoyed by thousands at once, yet has no *act* in which these thousands may concur. Music alone is capable of bringing together hundreds and thousands all consenting and combining with each other for the production and expression of one sublime emotion and effect. In it, therefore, the absolutely consentient action of the blessed in heaven finds its fittest symbol; that consentient action being no longer marred by the intemperate assertion of individualistic aims or feelings, as it is too often here, but carried on with perfect harmony and complete abandonment of all self-seeking.

Of all arts, too, music is the most independent and the least imitative.

Painting, however lofty and idealised, nevertheless depends entirely on what has been seen or may be seen around us. The veriest fancy-piece must yet be "true to nature," if it is to give any real

pleasure. Even the fantastic forms of arabesque could never have been imagined but for the existence of forms in nature, of which arabesques are only new and imaginary combinations. The ideal faces of Raffaelle are only idealised presentments of faces which nature has actually produced; were it impossible for nature to produce them they would be felt to be mere monsters, and sink to the level of caricature.

Architecture too, though of higher dignity, as being not merely imitative but to some extent creative, did nevertheless originate in imitations of natural objects, and can never exceed the narrow limits imposed on it by its necessary localisation. It is tied and bound to earth; each fine building, like each fine picture, can exist only in a single place. Like painting, too, it is essentially perishable. As a breath of flame is enough to destroy the finest picture, a rude touch sufficient to deface it, so "the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces" may be tumbled into promiscuous ruin in a few seconds by a single shock of earthquake; not to speak of the inevitable decay which must at length efface all the productions whether of painting, or statuary, or architecture. But music, as it is not an imitative

but a creative art, so are its productions as imperishable as the minds which have created them. Music, too, speaks a universal and unchanging language. Wherever mankind are sufficiently cultivated to appreciate them, the colossal works of our greater composers will impress and mould the minds of those that hear them ; they will make their way unfettered, uncontrolled by language ; for whilst languages differ, and they that speak different languages are mutually unintelligible, music speaks a universal language, which is understood everywhere by all. Even when married to words, music is really independent of them. The mighty climax of the Hallelujah chorus will be felt even by those who know not the words it wafts up to heaven on its pinions of sound ; the entangling and disentangling fugue which ends the "Messiah" has actually no need of the one word which it carries through all its convolutions of the storm of harmony. For music of the highest class does express a sequence and development of thought, though that thought be not compressible into the narrower channel of articulate speech. And especially does it lend itself to the expression of *adoring* thought ; that thought which sinks before the felt presence of

the Deity, and which is as ineffable as is the Deity Himself!

Let me say a few words to apply these considerations concerning the rise and gradual development of Christian worship to the conscience of those more especially whose office it is to conduct it.

I am quite aware of one great difficulty in their way. *Familiarity tends to beget irreverence.* When any one visits this grand cathedral for the first time, and takes part for the first time in its services, he is deeply impressed, if he has any capacity for elevated and religious feeling. The majestic roll of the organ, the long white-robed procession, the solitary voice of the intoning priest, the outburst of choral answer to it, act strongly even on the most uncultivated minds; there are few who do not feel them. But as the ritual becomes familiar the mind gets blunted to its solemn beauty. Nay, one is in danger of coming to look on it as monotonous and tedious. Hence the melancholy carelessness exhibited by too many clergymen in reciting the prayers of the church, or reading aloud the oracles of God. But strongest is the temptation to lack of interest and of seriousness in the case of the youngest portion of those who officiate in the services of our cathedrals.

Childhood is proverbially thoughtless, and exhortations addressed to children from this pulpit would hardly do much good. But children can be impressed, and are impressed, by the behaviour of their elders. If the grown-up members of our cathedral choirs realise the solemnity and the real grandeur of their function, their emotions will pass over from themselves into the hearts of the children with whom they are associated. For all emotion is contagious; and as levity in one is sure to tempt to levity in others, so seriousness and awe, when really felt, and not mere conventional grimace, will certainly produce a sobering impression even on the most light-minded. Think then, my brethren, associates with us in the conduct of the worship of Almighty God,—think of the responsibility you incur, if by any yielding to the temptations which the great Adversary seems peculiarly to throw in our way when we are approaching God in prayer, if by any flippancy of behaviour you cause one of these little ones to stumble! You are not injuring yourselves alone by thus making the services increasingly unreal to yourselves; you are perhaps destroying the very faculty of reverence in those whom, for good or for evil, you cannot help influencing! Even in the lowest point of view, you

cannot attain that full success in the musical expression of religious emotion which you must, for your own credit, wish for; a frivolous and undevout choir can produce not even any true artistic effect. But when you come to reflect on the mischief you may be doing to those whose childhood places them at your mercy; on the danger of religious feeling being stifled or killed in them by bad example; when you realise the possibility of their coming to curse the day on which they were first admitted in the services of the sanctuary, because that sanctuary and everything connected with it has become vulgarised and degraded and defiled for ever to them,—when you realise these dread possibilities of evil, you will, I am sure, shrink from yielding to those distractions which, whatever be the reason, do most powerfully beset us just at what ought to be our most solemn moments!

And what I say to you, I say to all the congregation, watch! Watch well your behaviour in this place; watch the feelings, the dispositions, of which behaviour is the expression. Recollect that every single service attended in a wrong spirit is a step towards the despiritualising of the mind, to the destruction of the Christian consciousness, to the death

of Christian hope! It is only with extreme difficulty that we can keep ourselves from being carried away with worldliness as with a flood; we breathe an atmosphere of contagion; the "unseen universe," in which our eternal lot is to be cast, seems very far from us, though in it and in the God that actuates it we live and move and have our being; and all the force of sober reflection is needed to prevent our utterly losing the sense of the only things that are real and permanent—the only things that are "our own," as Christ so significantly denominates them! As the services of this house of prayer may, if rightly used, upbear our minds and exalt our thoughts to heaven, so, if we attend them in a light and irreverent spirit, they will contribute to sink us down to hell! And our fall, if we do fall, will be the greater, our condemnation the more awful, the greater the opportunities for good we have perverted. Of none will the ruin be more inevitable and complete than of those who, having turned the very grace of God into lasciviousness, into mere wanton and sensual enjoyment, have received that grace in vain!

One chief means of protecting our souls from this shipwreck of faith is reverent and habitual attend-

ance at the Table of the Lord. And of that none need ever withdraw from this cathedral disappointed; the holy Table is decked every Sunday for the feast of love and thankful reminiscence. Only let none be deterred from approaching it by fear of unworthily partaking. If this fear be the fear begotten by godly awe and self-distrust it is actually a qualification for receiving rightly. Those only should not dare to come who come as a mere matter of course, without self-examination; who lack that sense of sin which is the first symptom of a regenerate heart, and which seems to be almost dying out in these days; those, therefore, to whom Christ is a mere historic personage, not a living Saviour. But if the consciousness of sin be vivid in you, if the remembrance of past sins be grievous unto you, if their burden be indeed felt to be intolerable, then come by all means. Come to Him who invites the weary and heavy-laden; come to Him in the ordinance He has Himself appointed, and by which His remembrance is kept for ever fresh; come to Him and He will give you rest,—rest already here, in the deep, simple acquiescence of the soul in God; rest for ever hereafter, in the unending fruition of His communicated Godhead.

VIII

PALM SUNDAY

Lazarus, come forth.—JOHN xi. 43.

I PURPOSE dwelling for a short time this morning on the greatest recorded miracle of Christ, because it is peculiarly connected, as my text declares, with the event which took place on this day more than eighteen hundred years ago, and which gives the day its common name, Palm Sunday; though, singularly enough, it is entirely left out of view in the services appointed for the day in the whole Western Church. The consequence has been that, though the Passion of our Lord is abundantly dwelt on, not merely on this Sunday, but throughout the week, the events which almost necessarily led up to it are in danger of being forgotten or disregarded in their connection with it.

I shall take for granted that the details of the

miracle are fresh in your recollection. There is a wonderfully graphic power in all St. John's accounts of what his beloved Master did. But nowhere does this power appear so effectively as in the narrative of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Once read, it can never be forgotten. Nor can any reproduction of the narrative in other words either elucidate it or assist its impressiveness.

Not pausing, therefore, on the incidents of the transaction, which would be quite unnecessary, I shall call your attention to some things concerning it which are seldom noticed, though they are of extreme importance for the right understanding of the gospel history, and of the four memoirs in which that history is enshrined.

And the first of these points is the remarkable fact that this miracle is recorded by St. John alone. In none of the other evangelists do we find the slightest allusion to it. In this respect, however, it does not stand isolated. For only two out of the miracles recorded by St. John are to be found in any other gospel: the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and that of our Lord's walking upon the water,—both parts, we may say, of the same transaction.

Now this peculiar feature of the fourth gospel at

once elucidates its purpose and ascertains its date. The three first gospels for the most part repeat the same miracles and discourses of our Lord, and have been therefore called the Synoptic Gospels, because it is in general easy to place them side by side, and embrace them in a common survey. St. Luke, indeed, does contain a long passage comprising discourses found nowhere else, but whose authenticity is guaranteed by their peculiar and inimitable excellence. Such are, for instance, the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, the prodigal son, the dishonest steward, the rich man and Lazarus, the good Samaritan, and the Pharisee and Publican,—all peculiar to St. Luke. But with the exception of this remarkable section of St. Luke, the three first gospels generally narrate pretty much the same events and record the same discourses. When we come to the fourth gospel all is new. Only two miracles are common to St. John and the other evangelists, while of the great discourses he has recorded not one has left a trace in them. Now this feature, always striking, becomes positively startling in the case of the miracle now before us. With regard to all Christ's other mighty works and words, we can give an easy and probable reason why they

should be reported by the synoptists and omitted by St. John, or omitted by the synoptists and reported by St. John. For the three first gospels deal almost exclusively with what our Lord did and taught in the country parts, and only give His deeds and sayings in Jerusalem during the last week before His Passion. The fourth gospel, on the other hand, almost confines its accounts of the Saviour's teaching to what He said on occasion of His visits to Jerusalem, and reports only three miracles done at any other place. And so carefully does St. John avoid treading in the path of the other evangelists, that when he comes to the Saviour's last visit to the Holy City, he almost entirely confines himself to what He said in the secret conclave of His more intimate disciples, the other evangelists having very fully narrated His last discourses in the Temple and in public. The circumstance, therefore, that the resurrection of Lazarus is not mentioned save in the fourth gospel, must be taken in connection with the evident determination of its author to bring forward only such works and words of Christ as had been omitted by the other evangelists. But this only accentuates the question, "Why did the other evangelists omit this crowning miracle of Christ?" For though, in

His previous career, they confined themselves to His work in Galilee and other country districts, they seem to have discarded this restriction when their Master's career was drawing to its close, and give His last public utterances in Jerusalem with special fulness. Why then did they not record the raising of Lazarus, a mighty work wrought only a very few days before the commencement of the last fatal week? And this question becomes more urgent when we recollect that to it St. John ascribes the final determination of the rulers of the nation to get rid of Jesus.

Before attempting to answer this important question, however, I wish to do what is of even still greater importance, because it tends to remove certain doubts which the difficulty in question might otherwise suggest. I wish to show you that, far from the miracle being discredited by the silence of the three first gospels regarding it, the resurrection of Lazarus or some equally impressive miracle is simply necessary to account for transactions recorded by all the gospels, and accepted as true by even the most sceptical of modern critics; I mean the Saviour's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the plot laid for His destruction, His seizure and execution.

Like every pious Israelite, our Lord was accus-

tomed each year to attend the three great festivals, on the due observance of which depended at once the covenanted favour of the Most High and the consciousness of Israel's sacred nationality — the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Doubtless His name was becoming more and more notorious, and we can therefore easily imagine that His presence at these feasts would be more and more eagerly expected; yet He had gone on for three years teaching without either any popular commotion being excited or any serious determination to destroy Him being arrived at. On these occasions He had entered the Holy City with His small band of inseparable followers, the apostles, like any other private person, little noticed in the huge throng which, especially at the Passover, crowded the roads and blocked up the gates; what was it, then, which on His last visit to Jerusalem moved the whole city to go forth to meet Him, thus for some time reversing the human tide flowing into the sacred precincts? What was it that induced the multitudes to cut down branches of palm trees and straw them in His way, whilst others cast their very garments beneath His feet? Why did the crowds that went before and followed cry out, saying,

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest"? There must have been something to fire the train, some sudden spark to kindle this flame of sudden and unprecedented enthusiasm. Now of this "something" the three first gospels tell us nothing. They give no clue to the secret of the transaction. They exhibit Jesus as suddenly become the idol of the multitude, but they do not tell us why He should thus suddenly have become their idol.

Here then steps in the fourth gospel; and in the story of the raising of Lazarus gives us the explanation which is necessary to redeem the bare unmotived narrative of the other gospels from the charge of abrupt improbability—of actual incoherence. In the voice which rang into the darkness of the rock-hewn sepulchre, "Lazarus, come forth!" in the strange ghastly apparition which came forth in obedience to that voice, in the transcendent proof of Divine Power which the resuscitation of a four days' corpse had given, we have the full and sufficing, but also the indispensable, explanation at once of the enthusiasm of the multitude and of the maddened hostility of its rulers. "The people that was with him when he called Lazarus out of the

tomb, and raised him from the dead, bare witness. For this cause also the multitude (not merely escorted him, but) went to meet him, because they heard that he had done this miracle." So says St. John, and his explanation is absolutely necessary to account for the sudden and enormous popularity of Jesus. On the other hand, the very same explanation is equally necessary to account for the as sudden determination of the authorities to put our Lord forthwith to death. They durst no longer dally with the danger which they fancied threatened themselves and the whole nation from our Saviour's increasing ascendency over the popular heart; for neither they nor the nation at large could understand a king whose kingdom was not of this world. And whilst the rulers, in their Sadducean unbelief, were in the utmost consternation lest Jesus should assume the character of king in the only sense in which they could understand it, and so bring down upon them the resistless might of Rome, the nation at large, who hated the ascendency of Rome and yet were blind to the tremendous power of Rome, became gradually disgusted and then infuriated at a man who called himself their king, and seemed to possess powers such as no human potentate had ever wielded,

and yet made not a single step towards the using of those powers for the purpose of establishing his kingdom on the ruins of that great heathen empire which had first cajoled and then enslaved the consecrated nation, and whose stronghold, the great tower Antonia, at that moment dominated the Temple of the Most High God. The raising of Lazarus at a spot so near Jerusalem as Bethany, was precisely the thing to evoke, in the first place, the unmeasured enthusiasm of the multitude by the stupendous power it exhibited, and in the next place to produce the bitterest resentment when they found this power so completely wasted as to the only purpose for which it had any value in their eyes. So with the rulers; it was the very thing to create in them the greatest alarm lest the miracle should precipitate a revolt the issue of which they were too conscious of the power of Rome to doubt; and in the next place, this very miracle put Jesus at their mercy, because it had raised expectations among the populace, the disappointment of which had infuriated them against our Lord. "We thought that it should have been he that should redeem Israel." Not merely of the disciples, but of the multitudes, this had been the secret hope; and when

they found that this redemption was not proceeding in accordance with their ideas, they were as ready, in the frustration of their hopes, to cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him," as they had been before to shout out Hosannas in His welcome.

I have endeavoured to show you that the raising of Lazarus, or some equivalent mighty work, performed just at that moment, is simply necessary to account for the temper both of the multitudes and of the chief priests and rulers on our Lord's last visit to His royal city; necessary to explain the circumstances of His triumphant entry, and of the ignominious crucifixion which so soon followed it; and that thus the story of the fourth gospel is essential to complete and explain the story of the other three.

I now come to the much more difficult inquiry, Why the history of this great crowning miracle, the miracle on which hinged the crisis of our Saviour's life, is not given—not in the most distant manner alluded to, in the synoptic gospels.

To approach this question properly it must be understood, in the first place, that the three first gospels were written far earlier than the fourth, and that they were well known to the author of the fourth. Everything conspires to prove these two points: The

place of the synoptic gospels in the Canon of the New Testament, taking precedence of St. John, though none of the three first evangelists could claim even an equal authority with the pre-eminently beloved disciple; the circumstance that the fourth gospel so carefully avoids, in almost every instance, repeating what the other gospels had already mentioned; the peculiar manner in which the fourth gospel always speaks of the Jews at large as being our Saviour's enemies, thus proving that it was written at a time when Judaism had completely broken with Christianity, which, judging from the absence of this symptom, it had not done when the synoptists wrote,—all these things, and many more that might be adduced did time permit, prove that St. John wrote subsequently to the other evangelists, and with their writings full before him. Now, if the three first gospels were all written before the siege and capture of Jerusalem, as the third, St. Luke's, unquestionably was (for it was written before the Book of Acts, and the Book of Acts only goes down to St. Paul's first imprisonment, breaking off with all the incompleteness of a contemporary diary), if, I say, the three first gospels were all written while Jerusalem was still standing

and the Jewish polity still in full activity, we may well conceive why the greatest of our Lord's miracles might be passed over by them in silence. We are told by St. John that the chief priests actually consulted how they might put Lazarus also to death, because on his account many of the Jews went and believed on Jesus. Lazarus, in a word, had become a marked man in consequence of this very miracle. May we not well conceive that the suspicious hostility of the authorities might long continue, smouldering but not extinct, and that the oral teaching of the earliest Church would shrink from anything that might rouse it into active and malignant exercise? Might not the natural wish to save Lazarus from a dangerous prominence have deterred the Church of Jerusalem, in the bosom of which he must have lived, from dwelling on the circumstances of his resuscitation, in their review of the Saviour's mighty works? And this the more because the mere presence of Lazarus in their midst would be quite enough to recall his tale to the minds of those that knew it, and to make any official record of it superfluous? Imagine for a moment one resident amongst ourselves, mixing not in the promiscuous society of a great city but in the intimacy

of a small, almost domestic circle, like the early Church at Jerusalem, who had made the awful experience of dying and being restored to life! Do you think that lengthened narrative would be needed while he was still amongst us? Would it be not far more natural to speak of what had befallen him only with whispering awe and bated breath? Should we not feel too much *oppressed* by the companionship of an individual thus awfully distinguished, to dwell publicly on the strange and mysterious experience—of which, too, he himself would probably be the very last to wish to speak? And thus, would not every motive of delicacy and reverence, as well as of regard for the safety of a brother, conspire to induce silence in the Church as to what every one knew, and what needed not therefore either to be talked or written of? The silence of the three first gospels on the resurrection of Lazarus, therefore, far from throwing doubt on the reality of a transaction which, as I have shown you, is essential for the explanation of subsequent events, only tends to show that these gospels, written while Jerusalem was still ruled by chief priests and Sadducees, and representing the oral teaching of the apostles in the Mother Church of Christendom, were written also during the

lifetime of the man whose life had been thus miraculously renewed, and is thus a strong contributory argument in favour of their very early origin, and consequently of their unimpeachable authority.

But this is not all we may learn in connection with this subject for the confirmation of our faith.

I have called your attention to the fact that, until our Saviour's last visit to Jerusalem, the three first gospels are silent as to His deeds and teaching in that city. If the explanation of their silence regarding the raising of Lazarus be correct, it is plain that part of it will go some way to explain their silence regarding our Lord's working in Jerusalem in general. Embodying the oral instruction prevalent in the Church of Jerusalem, it would be natural that they should dwell less on what Christ said and did there, than on what He said and did elsewhere. For His acts and words at Jerusalem would be enshrined in the memory of all Christians who were natives of that place. Even had they only subsequently to His resurrection been converted, they must have heard His words and seen His deeds before their conversion, and these they would not easily forget. But this was not the case as respects His words and deeds in Galilee and throughout the country parts.

These could only be known to dwellers at Jerusalem by rumour, or by the direct teaching of the apostles. Hence it appears to me quite natural that they should be selected by the apostles for the special instruction of the earliest founded Church, most members of which could not have heard or seen them; and hence it is that they have been embodied in those gospels which present the doctrine of that earliest Church. St. John, on the other hand, writing in extreme old age, long after the destruction of Jerusalem, and with the other gospels full before him, would naturally wish to preserve those discourses and those deeds of Christ especially which must have been household words at Jerusalem but, now that it was utterly destroyed and its Church dispersed, might be in danger of being forgotten. Hence, most probably, he devoted himself chiefly to the recording of our Saviour's acts in the Holy City, or its immediate vicinity, including that greatest of all His acts which was the proximate cause of His crucifixion. For the raising of Lazarus was no exception to the law under which St. Matthew brings all the Redeemer's mighty works,—the law that He could only remove our miseries by bearing them Himself. His miracles do not appear as the outcome of an irre-

sistible, passionless omnipotence. They seem to have drained His vital energies ; He knew on one occasion that a cure had been effected by feeling that virtue had gone out of Him ; and His final and eternal victory over death was only achieved by dying Himself. He came to give, not His omnipotence as God, but His life as man, for the salvation of mankind.

What I have said on the supplementary character of the gospel of St. John throws light indirectly on the relation of the three first gospels to each other. Had any one of them been written with the two others before its writer, it is inconceivable why its writer should not have adopted the method of St. John, avoiding what had been already consigned to memory by others. But, as we find that the three first gospels do, on the whole, present much the same summary of our Saviour's career, we must, I think, infer that, so far from copying from each other with slight and unaccountable variations, they wrote in complete independence of each other—probably were not aware of each other's existence. The sameness of language as well as of subject, in many cases, must be ascribed to that sameness of oral teaching which the exacter memory of Orientals renders

feasible. Story-tellers in the East will tell the very same story, time after time, in the very same words; and to *this*, not to any mutual copying from each other, a supposition which involves insoluble difficulties, and in working out which no two authorities agree,—to this tenacity of oral memory and transmission must be attributed the verbal identity which so often strikes us in the synoptic gospels. Representing the general oral teaching of the apostles in the earliest Church, it is no wonder that when they agree they should agree minutely: and differences, when they do exist, may be often traced to a deliberate purpose, which led the respective writers to emphasise or neglect different portions of the same transaction.

The three synoptists thus present the aspect of three perfectly independent, yet on all material points perfectly consentient transmitters of the one oral teaching of the earliest and Mother Church; the first, St. Matthew, writing for Jewish Christians chiefly in Palestine; the second, St. Mark, for the Church of Rome, a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles; the third, St. Luke, for a Gentile convert or set of converts, probably in one of the churches founded by St. Paul. And, taken in this light, they exhibit their

perfect sincerity not by flattering Jewish or Gentile prepossessions, but by the predominance of warnings against Jewish unbelief in those gospels which were wholly or chiefly intended for Jews.

I have said that the oral teaching of the earliest Church is represented in the synoptic gospels. For you must not imagine that oral teaching to have had much of what we now call doctrinal character. When Judas fell from his apostleship, Matthias was chosen out of the number of those who had companied with Jesus from His baptism by John till His ascension into heaven, expressly for the purpose of bearing witness of His resurrection. This, and the great facts of the Saviour's life, His deeds of love and power, His words of wondrous depth and illimitable applicativeness, were no doubt the themes dwelt on in the assembly. What is now called "the Gospel" by so many was probably little heard of there; it was the deeds and teaching of the Son of God that composed the Gospel then as they compose the Gospels now; and, if we only reverted to that early simplicity, and allowed the Master to speak to us Himself in those writings which are the essential documents of Christianity, we should have fewer differences of opinion and a far profounder and

less conceited religion than is prevalent in these days.

I trust that no reflective hearer will think I have unprofitably engaged his attention if I have led him in any degree to a clearer notion of the origin and nature of our present gospels, of their mutual relation to each other, and of their unconscious testimony to each other's truth. Whatever enables us to understand and appreciate the New Testament more thoroughly, tends also to build us up in that most holy faith which, though it existed before the New Testament, yet now rests chiefly on the New Testament. And never was there a time when that faith more required being corroborated and confirmed. Never was there a time when attacks from without were more dangerously backed up by unsound defences from within. The worst enemies of Revelation are those who tell us we ought to shrink from questioning and examining; thus virtually enjoining on us to disable ourselves for "giving a reason for the hope that is in us." The words of God in Revelation resemble His works in nature as in other respects, so especially in this, that they do not yield up their secrets without diligent research. He who reads Scripture in the same way in which

most of us gaze on the fair face of nature, may, indeed, gather from it quite enough to save him, just as the most careless observer can hardly fail, unless his mind be vitiated by a false philosophy, to infer from creation the existence and the power of its Creator. But it is only he who searches and examines to whose eyes will be disclosed the wonders that lie concealed, whether in the works or in the word of God. On this head the analogy between Creation and Revelation is complete, and goes far to prove that the last is as much of divine origin as is the first.

And especially is this intelligent scrutiny sure to reward us in all that concerns our Saviour Christ. "The testimony of Jesus is the very spirit of prophecy," and therefore everything that enables us better to apprehend the nature and to appreciate the method of this testimony must be of the highest moment to every Christian. *Christ is our religion;* and all that sets Him before us more distinctly, all that admits us more intimately to the circumstances of His work on earth, all that presents to us more vividly the connection between the Church He founded and the writings which that Church produced, and in which, again, she recognises the charter

of her existence and the standard of her action,—all such things have an interest to Christians beyond all other interest, inasmuch as they more and more distinctly present to us Him in whom we trust, and make us feel that in our Lord we have no mere ideal, no myth, but a real living, thinking, acting Person; who really spake words such as none other man has ever dared to speak, and did the deeds none other man could do. And in the calm majesty of the command, "Lazarus, come forth!" and in the instant obedience yielded to it by the resuscitated dead, we read the confirmation of the words which, years before, Christ spake to His unbelieving people: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming when *all* that are in the graves shall hear my voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation."

IX

WHITSUNDAY

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and the prayers.—ACTS ii. 42 (R.V.)

I HAVE often asked myself the question why, of the three great Christian festivals, Whitsunday should be the least felt and honoured. Such is certainly the case, if we confine ourselves to the honour paid by worship and not by mere holiday making. At Christmas and at Easter our churches are full of persons who will not withdraw from the Lord's Table on those days, though they perhaps never approach it on the usual monthly celebrations. But on Whitsunday there are not many more communicants than on common occasions; the double or treble throng of Easter and Christmas does not recognise Pentecost. And yet in one respect the

Feast of Pentecost is the most important of the three. For it is not too much to say that, but for the event we this day commemorate, and which signalised the first Christian Pentecost, we should hardly have come to celebrate any Christian feast whatever. Sunk as the disciples were in discouragement, the resurrection of their Master was absolutely necessary to give them the slightest animation—the slightest idea that their hopes were not entirely defeated. But something more than animation was necessary for their arduous, their almost inconceivable task. On the very last occasion on which they conversed with Him, their thoughts were all astray; they were dreaming of a kingdom of this world; their ideal was still the restoration of independence and sovereignty to the race of Israel. It was the teaching which began on this great day, the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the teaching of that inner presence which was cheaply purchased by the withdrawal of their Saviour from this earth, —it was *this* which alone qualified them for the great missionary work; which alone made them, not merely irrefragable witnesses of the great facts of Christ's life and death and resurrection, but wise architects of that mighty edifice which was to

be built upon these facts—the edifice of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. To state facts, and to organise a society founded on these facts, are quite distinct and different things; the apostles might very well have done the first with all imaginable power, without being able to do the second, had not the Spirit taken up His abode within them, giving them a right judgment in all things, and enabling them to rejoice in His holy comfort in the midst of all anxieties, perplexities, and distresses.

Why then does this great festival—the Festival of the Inauguration of the Church, of the beginning of that corporate existence against which the gates of Hades (the unseen world) never shall prevail, because the Spirit of Life Himself has taken up His abode within her,—why does this great crowning festival generally meet with such slight regard? More than one answer can be given to this important question. I call it an important question, because it goes to the very heart of Christianity considered as a social polity,—an agency in which men act through and on each other.

1. And first, I think one reason is the very spirituality of that which we this day commemorate.

The events of our Saviour's life on earth are, indeed, fraught with spiritual meaning and importance, but still they are events in a human life which we can realise as they pass successively before us. But the descent of the Divine Spirit on the Church, though externally proclaimed and symbolised by the distributed tongues as of fire which sate on each of the disciples—the descent of the Holy Spirit is, in itself, an entirely internal fact, a fact eluding observation, and only cognisable by its results. It might have taken place without the sound of a rushing mighty wind, without the fiery tongues; these were, as I said, mere outward signs. The thing signified went beyond them; in itself it was invisible and indetectible. And we, by our very constitutions, are so engrossed with what we can see and hear and touch, that the most potent inner realities are too generally unfelt by us. Our lives are so *coarsened*, if I may coin the word, with the continual friction of the world around us, that we lose sense of those finer things which lie beyond the claims of ordinary life. We are told, and I suppose most of us believe after a fashion, that we have undying spirits, that the present life is but a vestibule or porch to another, as unlike it as spirit is to body; but how little do we

think about this future endless reality in comparison with the present fleeting show! Now the principle on which we neglect the future life in our absorption in the present is just the same as that on which we neglect the Festival of the Descent of the Spirit on the Church, in comparison with those of the birth and of the resurrection of our Lord. Nay, we may even perceive a graduation of our attention between the three great feasts: Christmas, the Feast of the Birth of Christ, attracting more general devotion to it than Easter, the Festival of the Resurrection, as that again commands more respect than does Whitsuntide; the natural body, the spiritual body, and the pure spirit being in an ascending line into those inconceivable regions, that inconceivable state in which we may believe, but with which we cannot fully sympathise.

If we wish to verify this idea, let us turn to the history of Thomas. When Christ said to the doubting apostle, his doubts having been removed, and the revulsion consequent on their removal having extorted from him the grandest confession of faith in his Master that had as yet been uttered, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they which have not seen me, and yet

have believed!"—when we read these words of Christ, do we not in reality feel, all of us who have felt or can feel at all upon the subject, that we should much prefer the inferior blessedness of Thomas to the superior blessedness allotted to our own faith? Do we not in secret sigh after such a revelation as was made to him, and think ourselves infinitely less happy because we do not have it? Is there one in this cathedral who does not in reality think himself at a disadvantage when compared with the apostles and first disciples who had "seen the Lord"? But what does this mean? It means that we forget that after all, without that inward conviction which we are assured is produced by the action of the spirit only, all outward evidence is simply unproductive, all wealth of immediate testimony cannot avail to renew our minds and enable Christians to ascend to heaven with Christ. Without the spirit, the events of our Lord's career must ever be purely external to us, and therefore have no real effect upon us. And being purely external, they will be incredible; yea, though we even witnessed their transaction. This is the reason why Christ's miracles had no effect on so many of their beholders; why unbelievers, at this day, having no

idea of their true meaning and purpose, being blind to the character of Christ, reject as idle tales the story of the Gospels, instinct though it is with a vitality and power which no fable, however cunningly devised, could ever have. To be really influenced by anything we hear or see we must discern its bearing on ourselves. Without this we have nothing more to do with it than the blind have to do with colour, than the deaf have to do with sounds. It is the inner spirit,—first our own, and then the Spirit of God acting on and through our own,—that makes the life and death and resurrection of the Christ anything more to us than a picture is to a blind man or a symphony of music is to a deaf man.

We must, of course, be ready to give a reason for our faith to all who ask it of us, with meekness and with fear, according to apostolic precept. We must endeavour to convince inquiring unbelievers, or at least to show them that what they allege against our faith is not valid. But when unbelief is positive, when it arises, not from want of information or evidence, but from want of sympathy, from lack of spiritual apprehensiveness, the utmost we can do is to show the futility of every theory to account for the rise and progress of Christianity, except the theory

that Christianity is true. The attack can always be shown to break down, but you can no more thereby convince the gainsayer who is one from lack of spiritual interest, than you can convince the man who has no ear of the grandeur of one of Handel's choruses, or the man who is colour-blind of the beauty of one of Titian's pictures.

In other things we are accustomed to this ; we make allowance for it : if we are sometimes a little irritated, we are also amused when we come across people who have no taste in art, in poetry, or painting or music. But, after all, such persons are themselves the chief sufferers ; and though we generally find that they pride themselves on the very defects which make them unfit to judge, and conceive themselves as standing on a higher level than those poor weak enthusiasts who are carried out of themselves by the grand or the beautiful in art, we allow their conceit to pass without being seriously annoyed by it. The analogy between such defects and defects in spiritual insight or sympathy is perfect. What the tasteless man is to art, the unspiritual man is to religion, and can as little pass sentence on what he cannot comprehend. The only difference is, that here we are met by facts which

cannot be rationally accounted for except on the supposition that Christianity is true. But then these facts have a spiritual bearing; they lie entirely out of the plane of his sympathy and experience; and when you have gone through the whole set of his evasions and suppositions, when you have shown that no really feasible account of the rise and progress of Christianity has been given except that which involves its truth, you have not touched his spirit; he may possibly be silenced, but he is not convinced; he may be confuted, but he is not converted.

It is in dealing with this class of persons that our Lord's advice comes in: "Give not things holy to dogs, nor cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn again and rend you." In other words, persons who have no sense of holiness, who do not even understand what it means, or persons who revel in impurity, and have no more wish than dogs or swine to rise out of this low condition, are not to be appealed to in spiritual matters; and your well-meant attempts to influence them will only give them a welcome opportunity of insulting or injuring you.

Of this moral unbelief there is, and always has

been, much in the world ; in these days it is peculiarly prominent and provoking. There are many now who take the most evident delight, though of course they disclaim it, in doing all they can to destroy that belief in the minds of other men which they have disabled themselves for feeling.

Here, then, is the chief reason for the little stress which is generally laid on this day's commemoration. It is the commemoration of an event so purely spiritual that none can at all appreciate it save those who are spiritual themselves. Those who have not experienced the illapse of the Holy Ghost into their own hearts cannot feel much concern in His descent upon the Church.

2. Another reason for the undervaluing of this festival is the little value in which men hold the Church, whose inauguration it celebrates.

Except in the region of pure intellect, and in one department only of even that—I mean mathematics or mathematical physics—the human mind never seems to make any direct advance. In everything else its progress is very much like that of a drunken man along a road, always going from one side to the other. So it is with religion. Time was when the Church was held in absolutely idola-

trous veneration. Its ministers had the keys of heaven and hell, and could open or shut them at their pleasure. The Church took the place of Him whom it pretended to represent. And this is still the attitude of mind of the larger portion of the population of this island; though it is to be observed that the influence of the Church over the people now has to be maintained by pandering to their vices. *We* have shaken off this exorbitant respect for ecclesiastical authority; perhaps we have come to feel no respect whatever for it. When you read the words used by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians concerning the Church, when you hear him say that by or in it is disclosed "the multiform wisdom of God," that it is "the body of Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," do you ever dream of applying this language to what is now called "the visible Church"? Will you not feel surprised when I tell you that, after carefully reading St. Paul's Epistles, I am satisfied that that apostle never conceived the idea which we present under the name of "the invisible Church" on earth? That, by the Church, of which such glorious things are spoken, he meant simply the body of persons professing to believe in Christ, and who

were organised into a society that could be seen and known of all men?

It is God's will that men should gain their knowledge, even of Himself, mainly through each other's instrumentality. We might, indeed, from the mere things we see about us, infer the eternal power and Godhead of their Maker; and this would be something: but it would not be enough. We want to know more about our Creator than that He exists and is omnipotent. That further knowledge we have through Jesus Christ His Son. But in His case we have our knowledge not from personal observation but from human testimony. We could know nothing about Jesus were we not told. We are on this point indebted entirely to history, *i.e.* to human witness. And this witness must be kept up. It will not do to allow the books in which it is chiefly contained to be the only witnesses. Here, then, comes in the further element with which this festival deals, the element of the divine acting through the human; for though the Spirit of God does not directly communicate to any one the historic events of our Saviour's life, He alone stamps these events with their true significance, and makes them tell on the heart and life. To preserve this

testimony in all possible effectiveness it must then be organised. Accordingly, the Church is a Society consisting of persons who profess to believe in Christ, and by their organisation these persons acquire tenfold the power they would have if each acted singly and by himself. The very usages and ceremonies of the Society, its meetings for prayer and praise, for reading the history of Christ and the instructions of His apostles, above all, for commemorating His death and resurrection, are a standing proclamation of the truth of Christianity, a perpetual preaching of it to all who have ears to hear. But the Church is much more than any mere human society. It has a life of its own, such as no other human society has; in all its different forms, wherever there is the confession of that faith which its Master prescribed, it has the Spirit of God within it; it is the temple of the Holy Ghost containing many mansions. And to think meanly of the temple is to think meanly of Him who dwells therein.

It is true that the dissensions and schisms which rend the Church deprive it of that appearance of unity the reality of which is essential. But we must always recollect that we have no right to con-

fine the Church within narrower limits than Christ has fixed. Those limits are the two Sacraments of His own appointment, and which are the only rites He has appointed. Wherever these appear there the Church exists. Nay, wherever even one only of them appears, wherever men are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, there is the Church, though mutilated and defective. The inner life will never be wanting utterly where the form conditioning that life exists.

But certainly the Church in full perfection exists only there where the four conditions laid down in my text exist: where its members continue in the doctrine of the apostles, and in their fellowship, and in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, and in the prayers—the prayers, *i.e.* of the Church as a body, not the mere private devotions of her individual members. Those can hardly claim to be in the full fellowship of the apostles who reject that form of church government which their maturer wisdom devised and bequeathed. And it will generally be found that, where their fellowship is presumptuously and unnecessarily abandoned, there is at least great danger that their doctrine will be abandoned too. It is a remarkable and impressive fact that the

denial of the Deity of Christ has never, since the fifth century, flourished in any church episcopally governed.

It is chiefly on account of the security for fundamental doctrine which is guaranteed by Episcopacy that we are warranted in maintaining the historic Episcopate, as it existed unbroken throughout the whole Church for the first fifteen hundred years of its existence. *Then* a change took place, and some portions of the Church were driven by circumstances to abandon the apostolically created form of church government. But the reformers did this unwillingly, and their unwillingness has been amply justified by the result. And it is one of the most cheering signs of the times that a desire for reunion on the old lines is becoming strong in the minds of many of the most learned and zealous of our Presbyterian brethren. Some of them have openly proclaimed their perfect acquiescence in the terms of union proposed by the collective Anglican Episcopate, and adopted by our own Church at her last Synod.

And, to apply to individuals what I have been saying of the society to which individual Christians must belong in one or other of its parts, we may best judge of our own spiritual state not by con-

sulting inner emotions, which may deceive us, but by asking ourselves the plain and easily answered question, whether we do as those earliest Christian converts did. Do we continue steadfast in the doctrine of the apostles? To do this, we must assiduously meditate on what the apostles taught and still teach us by their writings. Do we continue steadfast in the apostles' fellowship? To do this, we must be attached to the Church from conviction, not from custom or fashion; and we must show our attachment by doing all we can to support it. If we were members of a club we should not default with our subscriptions. And are we to abuse the generosity of the Church in imposing no definite subscription on us by using all her ordinances without contributing to her support? Is such baseness to pass current? Do we fancy that God can be mocked by professions of attachment to His cause which we never dream of denying ourselves—I will not say a single comfort, but—a single enjoyment to enable us to convert into realities? Be not deceived, God is not thus mocked; it is ill trifling with Omniscience. Whatsoever a man soweth, that, and that only, shall he reap. The very privileges of the Church will turn into curses in the case of those

who use them without contributing as they have means towards them. Are we habitual in attending the Table of the Lord—not as a reward for fancied superior piety or goodness, but as the support of the spiritual life, and from reverence to Him who ordained the rite? Lastly, do we continue in prayer, not merely in private, as I said before, but in public, taking real part in the liturgy, as knowing that there is a more absolute and unqualified promise to united than to individual supplications? Is the Church service a reality to us? or do we sit carelessly in the House of God, without thinking of what is going on, without responding, waiting impatiently for the conclusion of the prayers that we may get to the sermon, if haply this babbler may have something new to tell us; or better still, that we may listen with appreciative insolence to the anthem which ought to wing our souls to heaven, but which, if it does not that, will only rivet them faster to earth, because it will turn what ought to be rapturous devotion into mere sensuous enjoyment?

These are questions which each must answer for himself. And I beseech you to put them and answer them carefully and thoughtfully, not after the manner of dissemblers with God, nor as though these matters

had no claim upon you. We find ourselves in the midst of a world which asserts its claims on us loudly enough. We cannot help existing. Suicide even is no escape; and with existence come responsibilities which we may ignore but cannot discard. In this world this truth forces itself on all; recollect that it is just as true as regards the future world. For good or ill we must all hereafter live that life which we can only live by living here to God, or die that death which is too terrible to contemplate.

X

THE VACILLATIONS OF UNBELIEF

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the market-places, which call unto their fellows, and say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed unto you, and ye did not mourn.—MATT. xi. 16, 17 (R.V.)

IT has been often noticed that, though the Saviour is frequently described as weeping, on not a single occasion is He said to have laughed. The grave of Lazarus, the slopes of Olivet, were witnesses of the tears He shed in pity for human suffering, in grief for human obduracy; but no place, no occasion, is ever mentioned as witnessing or eliciting His laughter. And we feel that the very supposition of such emotion is incompatible with the majestic image of the Son of God; that it offends all sense of pro-

priety. Nor is this owing merely to our conceptions of His dignity as the Eternal Son. The idea of a laughing Christ is inconsistent even with His character as man. The two frames in which laughter originates must have been alike foreign to His mind. We cannot imagine the Man of Sorrows in a mood of light-hearted merriment. As little can we imagine Him in a mood of sarcastic scorn. And the Evangelists, in this as in other particulars, have shown themselves to be faithful limners of a real character in that, uncontrolled by any reflective standard, they have adhered to that perfect verisimilitude which their critical powers were assuredly not equal to suggest.

But though the Saviour never laughed Himself, He does nevertheless sometimes appeal to that sense of the incongruous which often produces laughter. Thus in one of His sternest warnings, when, as St. Luke graphically narrates, He suddenly turned round on the multitudes who were unthinkingly thronging after Him on His last journey to Jerusalem, and bade them reflect what they were undertaking when they were undertaking to follow Him,—He appeals to the mockery which all beholders would heap on the man who should begin to build without calculating whether he had wherewithal to finish; and in the

remarkable passage I have selected as my text there is no mistaking the ludicrous in the simile by which He describes the conduct and the character of His contemporaries. But it is to be noted that in both these instances the laughable is only a disguised aspect of the lamentable. The folly which involves a man in profuse outlay before calculating whether his means suffice will probably entail his ruin ; the childish discontent which nothing could appease, which quarrelled alike with the austerity of the Baptist and the suavity of the Redeemer, betokened hearts hopelessly closed against every assault of goodness in whatever shape. And such a state of mind is not confined to the Jews in our Saviour's time. It exists now as much as then, and demands the same treatment on the part of God. In every revelation He has hitherto made to man, by whatever means, things are so contrived that we are never *forced* to believe against our will. The disclosure of truth is so made as to test the sincerity of our wish to ascertain the truth. If we choose to object we can always find some handle for an objection ; if we like to criticise and find fault,—that sure sign of a grovelling and uncreative mind,—we can always detect some welcome flaw. And, not to speak of professed

unbelievers, among professing Christians there are plenty whom it would be as vain to attempt conciliating as it would be to try to please a set of truant children, idling in the streets when they ought to be at school, discontented from very satiety of play, and each quarrelling with every amusement suggested by the rest.

The text thus describes a certain feature in the character of those who will not come to Jesus that they may have life, not merely in that generation, but throughout all ages. It may be instructive to review the occasion which suggested it, and the whole discourse of which it forms a part. The forerunner had been cast into prison by Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, on account of the uncourtly faithfulness with which he had reproved that prince's darling sin. Herod had seduced his brother's wife, or had been seduced by her; and then, thinking, as it should seem, to atone for the wrong by perpetuating it, he had married her. But the Baptist, who, as St. Mark tells us, had acquired much influence over him, and enjoyed his respect, used the opportunities of confidential communication which Eastern sages or prophets often have with Eastern princes for the purpose of tearing away the veil of sophistry with

which the guilty pair had tried to cloak their wickedness, and told Herod plainly, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." This was the crisis of Herod's life. Had he complied with the remonstrances of conscience, had he taken the perplexity in which he found himself after listening to John for a symptom of his danger (πολλὰ ἠπόρει), he might have disenthralled himself from a guilty connection with a woman who would appear to have been much more wicked than himself, and whose influence, fatal in one instance, was doubtless generally noxious; he might have lived happily and died peacefully, perhaps even have been an instrument for the promotion of the truth. But he resisted the stirrings of the Spirit; he silenced his perplexities; he persevered in what he knew was wrong, and of course had to model his conduct accordingly. Reasons of state would then enforce the suggestions of resentment. The man who had spoken with such freedom to the king himself might be expected to speak with at least equal freedom to his subjects; the authority of government, nay, the safety of the royal person, might be imperilled. John must therefore be imprisoned, lest his very holiness should make him dangerous. But nothing

beyond imprisonment was contemplated to prevent his embarrassing the government. Herod still respected his state-prisoner; still heard him gladly, and by his perplexities acknowledged that he spoke the truth. But he could not bring himself to get rid of his perplexities for ever by taking the one step necessary; the sin that did most easily beset him he could not relinquish. And does this picture of a mind perplexed and yet unwilling to free itself by one vigorous effort from its perplexities find no likeness amongst ourselves? Is there no one here who is living an ambiguous life,—a life which he cannot quite defend, and yet cannot quite resign; who, torn sometimes by remorse, yet fobs it off with an appeal to the necessities of circumstances and the absurdity of an impracticable saintship? We all know how the mind even of really good men is often worked and tortured out of shape by the stress of worldly business, and especially by the struggles of ambition; the career of so-called great men is but too often a course of principles loudly asserted, and then gradually and silently violated. But, not to dwell on illustrious defeats, do we not all at some time or other incur the condemnation of seeing clearly what is right and then doing what is wrong?

Pause, then, I would say to every one here present, the next time you feel thus tempted. Let not any previous fall—any succession of previous falls—prevent your resolving the next time the trial comes that, with God's blessing, you will not allow yourself to be overcome again. The "awful" past is gone—irrevocably gone; but the future is still yours if you will but brace yourself up to seize on it. Every time you give way resistance becomes more difficult. Herod might easily have resisted the first seduction. But he did not—he fell. Then came the voice of God speaking through His prophet; he felt that the prophet spoke the truth, but he was angry and terrified, and so, instead of yielding, he put his too loyal monitor in prison. Even then he was not fatally committed. Again and again the remonstrance came. Many times he communed with the man he could not help revering; he heard him gladly, and was sore perplexed. But it all came to nothing; he went on and on in his iniquity till at last, when his heart was merry with wine at a banquet where he exhibited all his petty grandeurs, he gave a silly promise to the wicked daughter of his wicked paramour,—a girl who could stoop to the unspeakable degradation of acting the part of a

ballet-dancer before a riotous assembly of men,—confirming the promise with an oath which he feared to break, more for the sake of his boon-companions than for the sake of the God whose name he had thus prostituted, and which he redeemed accordingly with murder,—the murder of the prophet who had almost but not altogether persuaded him to turn from his wickedness and live! And from that moment his course went headlong downwards. Once afterwards, on hearing of the miracles of Christ, he betrayed a momentary uneasiness; he said, "It is John the Baptist whom I beheaded who is risen from the dead:" but closer inquiry soon dispelled that fear, and then the only sensation left was vulgar curiosity, which, when the Redeemer refused to gratify, he who had formerly revered the mere forerunner of the Highest now beheld in the Highest Himself, as He stood in silent dignity before him, nothing but a reputed conjuror, a detected impostor! So utterly had not only all goodness, but all sense of goodness and greatness, left this miserable dupe of one besetting sin!

The context introduces us to the imprisoned prophet while suffering under what we must regard as a peculiar trial of his faith. We may well

imagine how a man so active as the Baptist, accustomed to the free air, the untrammelled life of the desert, would wither in the compulsory idleness, the sickening restraint, of an Eastern prison. This would be a peculiarly favourable season for the Tempter. The faith which had been fed and strengthened by abundant labours and great results would droop in solitude and inactivity. The crowds he had influenced were no longer there to cheer and reward his toil. God might almost seem to have disowned His messenger by thus disabling him. For had he been indeed the messenger sent before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, how was it that he was so soon removed, before he had had time to make any durable impression?

And if he began thus to doubt the validity of his *own* mission, doubts would naturally throng on his mind as to the validity of the *Saviour's* mission. The appearance of the Spirit which he had seen descending like a dove and lighting on Jesus at His baptism, the voice from heaven which had accompanied that vision and proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son,"—all the various evidences which had fully satisfied the Baptist *then*, were only present to his memory *now*; and we can well conceive that

the overwrought mind, in attempting to recall them fully for the purpose of confirming and encouraging its faith, might gradually lose the definite sharpness of their outline, and so confuse itself as to be tempted at length to ask whether they might not have been illusions? Persons who have tried to realise in all its circumstances some past transaction of special moment, especially upon a sick-bed, will understand the possibility of such a temporary eclipse of certainty. And the more important the transaction, and the more eager, therefore, the mind is in retracing its details, the greater is the likelihood of the mental gaze becoming dazzled, as it were, by the too great fixity with which it contemplates it. And this is just what we may conceive to have happened with the Baptist. The more eagerly did he recall the miraculous confirmation of Christ's authority, the more might his recollections become confused; and the very agony which doubt would cause might increase doubt by augmenting that confusion. And why should we fear acknowledging such a momentary eclipse of the Baptist's faith? Do we detract from the great characters of Scripture by recollecting that, after all, they were only men—men of like passions with ourselves? By setting them on a

pedestal of unhuman greatness, do we not rob ourselves of the rich consolations which their fully recognised temptations and their final triumphs are calculated to supply? Are there not numbers now who are tempted in a very similar manner to say, Is Christ He that should come; or do we look for another? Do we look for any one to come at all? And are such persons to be deprived of the consolation of seeing their doubts anticipated and conquered? Recollect who it is that compose the cloud of witnesses, with whose sympathy the apostolic author of the epistle to the Hebrews cheers us on our course; not angels who have never known our difficulties, but glorified saints who have themselves overcome those difficulties, in the catalogue of which temptation occupies so strangely prominent a place;[1] and who therefore watch our struggles with the more vivid interest. Nay, so precious does he consider the interest begotten by fellowship in temptation, that he specially insists on the Saviour Himself "having been in all points tempted like as we are," though, in His case, "without sin."

Suffering then under the gloom produced by this temporary eclipse of faith, the Baptist sent two of

[1] Hebrews xi. 37.

his disciples to ask Jesus the decisive question, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" The immediate occasion of his sending them, we are told, was his hearing in the prison of the mighty works by which the Saviour was inaugurating His career. The very report of those works, paradoxical as it may sound, may have increased the Baptist's doubts. For he might argue, Surely if Jesus were really the Messiah, He would not suffer His forerunner to pine in the useless seclusion of a prison! Surely the King would not thus neglect His ambassador! His works show He has the *power*, why then has He not the *will* to deliver me? Can it be that He is jealous of my influence, and is glad of my enforced withdrawal from competition? A mixture of doubt and impatience seems to have dictated his message. At all events he would thereby revive in the Master's mind the recollection of His servant. A mood like this verged, at least, on the danger of apostasy. But there was one thing which proved the inner soundness of the man; in his perplexity he sent at once to Him who had caused it, and could alone remove it. Not satisfied with brooding over these feelings in his solitary heart, or imparting them to others in useless confidence; not satisfied with

circuitous inquiries at second hand, and with information tainted probably by prejudice, he sent boldly at once to Jesus Himself. There is a manly straightforwardness in this procedure which tallies exactly with his character as otherwise exhibited, and proves that his wavering could not be eventually dangerous, because it was always perfectly sincere. As his case, therefore, is probably in some degree, at some time or other, the case of every thoughtful Christian, let him be our model in combating the various doubts which will be sure to spring up within us. In all time of perplexity let us not be afraid to confess and to face those doubts. We cannot, indeed, send messengers to Christ as John could; but we can make Christ's acquaintance for ourselves in the pages of those gospels which must be faithful records of His decisive words and acts, for the simple reason that no man in those days was capable of inventing them. In those words and acts we can see, as John's disciples saw in the miracles performed before them, the credentials of a character which the all-varied scepticism of two thousand years has never sullied, and which is as much above the achievements of all other men as its records are above all other history. And we can then go to the throne of that

God of whom Jesus professed to be the Son and Messenger, and ask Him with confidence, if we are as much in earnest in our lives to do His will as we are in our professed wishes to ascertain it,—we can confidently ask Him to tell us by His secret inspiration whether this man was sent by Him or not, whether the doctrine he proclaimed be true or not, whether the promises of eternal quenchless life in Christ be a reality, brightening our sorrowful course through time with an assurance of better things hereafter; or whether we, of all men, are most pitiable in that we have followed a delusion in giving ourselves up to the pursuit of whatsoever things are pure, are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, instead of making the most of the present, eating and drinking and debauching, since to-morrow we die! Brethren, whatever agonies of doubt may sometimes almost overcome us, however violently the needle may sometimes oscillate from its pole under the storms of variously assailing unbelief, now scientific, now critical, now philosophical, I have no fear whatever for the ultimate result in the case of every sincere and candid mind. And even if not in this life, even if pursued to the grave by these awful uncertainties, these perturbations and

hesitancies of the inquiring spirit, yet in the next He who loved us and gave Himself for us will not suffer us to perish if we only cling to Him, resolved that even though He slay us we will trust Him!

Our experiences on this head are analysed, so to speak, in the Saviour's reply to John's disciples. After referring them to His works, and, above all, to His preaching of the good news to the poor, He adds, "And blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me"; whom My procedure does not shock, and cause to stumble. For these words at once warn of the danger incurred by nourishing doubt, allow for the difficulty of avoiding it, and console with the prospect of that superior happiness which shall result from finally overcoming it. Let us give these points some brief attention.

The danger in John's case consisted (as it does in ours) in being led to question God's truth because he did not as yet understand God's method of promoting it. The difficulty of avoiding it lay, in his case, as it does in the case of every Christian minister especially, in his own intense personal interest in God's method of promoting it. The Baptist was on the point of questioning Christ's mission because he did not understand Christ's method of advancing it.

The difficulty of avoiding this danger was created chiefly by his personal concern in the advancement of Christ's mission, and the discouragement he was now enduring in being reduced to inactivity. And do we not experience this danger, this difficulty ourselves, in these strange times? Is not the course of the world utterly perplexing on the supposition that its kingdoms are ultimately to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ? Does the revival of the power of error over large portions of Christendom, its triumphant re-entrance on possessions whence it had seemed long banished, offer no temptations to doubt the truth? Do the "unhappy divisions" of Protestantism, the miserable squabbles and competitions of rival denominations, the appeal to prejudice, and the refusal to face free inquiry, the forging anew the chains of a spurious authority,—do all these features of our Christianity promise well for the triumph of truth? I put aside the fashionable philosophic scepticism, which has hastily welcomed an unproved hypothesis in order to get rid of a controlling and regulating Deity, because I feel sure that the hypothesis is being sapped in the very point where alone it threatens religion, and will be soon quietly modified or

abandoned in deference to the inexorable calculations of mathematics; evolution without a Providence, by a mere tentative process and natural selection, will disappear when it once comes to be understood that there is not time for it in the history of our planetary system. But, quite apart from such temporary disturbances of faith, which come up from time to time almost in a night, like Jonah's gourd, and disappear as rapidly, there is in the bosom of professing Christianity quite enough matter to cause doubts and difficulties of a very similar kind to those that tried the Baptist. And the danger, especially of vowed ministers of Christ, is greatly enhanced by their personal environment. Laymen may, to some extent, be calm spectators of the distressing scene, but ministers and servants of the Lord cannot. They have to be continually instructing, at least trying to instruct, others; how can they do this if they are not certain of the ground themselves? And in how many ways is not certainty now sapped by the things they see and hear on every side? The interpretation of the Scriptures is becoming different from what it used to be; the authority of Scripture is differently understood; the question, "What is the Church?"

seems further than ever from being answered; the Romish reply is definite but false; the Protestant reply is so indefinite as to be hardly a reply at all. All these things—and they are but a bare sample of the multiform doubts that question us on every side — are against our satisfied acquiescence in anything with which we are acquainted; it is a time of upheaval; the foundations of the great deep are breaking up. What shall the righteous do? The scheme of this world's providential government is far too vast for our comprehension; but we are not too insignificant to be involved, perhaps crushed, in its mighty working. We look back on the times of persecution with reverence for those who suffered in them. The blood of martyrs has been called the seed of the Church; and the persuasion that their sufferings were promoting God's glory and man's salvation may have contributed to bear up many and many a one the record of whose fiery trial has made us feel as if we were poor creatures in comparison. But there is a slow and inglorious martyrdom of wearing anxiety and uncertainty; of continual discouragement; of toil uncheered by assurance, unblessed perhaps, therefore, by success; of efforts numbed by doubt, like the ineffectual

struggles of a man in the agonies of nightmare; there is a spending one's strength for nought apparently, whilst those who ought to cheer and nerve us seem to watch us with cold indifference, or even take an infernal pleasure in adding to our perplexities; or we may be obliged to predict to unbelieving ears the mischiefs, the ruin, we behold too surely advancing, like the fabled prophetess of old whose doom it was ever to warn and ever to warn in vain; or we may be paralysed by poverty, or struck down in the midst of our activity by ill-health; and who shall compare with the vast aggregate of lingering suffering thus entailed,—the quick sharp pangs which in a single hour translated the martyr of celebrity to heaven? Much consolation, therefore, may we all, but especially ministers of Christ in these troublous times, derive from the history of John. His was a martyrdom of a somewhat similar kind; slow, inglorious, discouraging. His career was hardly begun when it was ended; ended not by a sudden though painful death, but by the spirit-wasting tedium of imprisonment, an imprisonment rendered doubly painful by incipient and gnawing doubt; and from which he was only delivered by the wiles of an adulteress and the axe

of the executioner, and that too, in the solitude of his dungeon, with no opportunity for glorifying God and encouraging His followers by the grand spectacle of faith triumphant over death! Surely his blessedness was great, in that he was but perplexed for a time and did not stumble so as to fall! Having thus endeavoured to appreciate the trial of the Baptist's faith in its bearing on our own experience, let us follow our Lord in the address to the multitude in which He exalts his character, and contrasts it with their various expectations with regard to him.

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" You heard that a man austere in his appearance, severe in his language, had begun to preach, not in the crowded cities or clustering villages, where surely a preacher might expect to gain the largest audiences, but in the wild pasture-land, where no impressions of everyday life might secularise the effect of his appeals. "What then went ye out expecting to find in him? A reed shaken by the wind?" An orator swayed by every breath of popular applause or censure, to whom man's approbation is the breath of life, and in whose eloquence you might welcome an embellished reproduction of your own corrupt ideas,

a pleasing acknowledgment of your own superiority? Or did you expect to find a man clothed in soft raiment, luxurious in habits, compliant in temper, quite ready to acquiesce in spiritual wickedness, provided it be in high places, and to make every candid allowance for fashionable vice? Alas! such characters seek not the wilderness, nor are they apt to incur imprisonment; it is in kings' palaces and in the houses of the wealthy that soft dress and pliant consciences are at home. What then went ye out to see, if it was neither one who would flatter the multitude in order to lead them, nor one who would flatter the great in order to make profit out of them; neither a demagogue nor a courtier, kindred characters in baseness? "A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet; for this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, to prepare thy way before thee." "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." But could such a man really please you? Did you not, while expecting a prophet to rise up in the spirit and power of Elijah, secretly desire that his words

might belie his character; did not the multitude hope that he would pander to their discontents; did not the great and wealthy trust he would be lenient to their oppressions? How then should you, who appreciate not even the mission of the Baptist, though he came with no other message than the concentrated essence of the Law and the Prophets, which have been for ages calling you to repentance,—how should you, who could not bear in John the mere enforcement of your own idolised but neglected Scriptures, be prepared to duly welcome that better dispensation for which the Law and the Prophets, until John, were vainly endeavouring to prepare you? How should you, who never felt the need of being forgiven, because you never really knew what it was to repent, be prepared to welcome no longer the emblems but the reality of pardon in the great sacrifice on which the kingdom of God is to be founded? What wonder if, in such a frame, you should be doing violence to that kingdom; entering it by force, as it were; claiming and seizing its blessings as if they were your mere due,—a frame of mind which will rapidly change when you perceive how unlike they are to your carnal expectations! Such I believe to be the meaning of the difficult

passage which forms the transition from our Lord's description of the Baptist's character and office to the simile which illustrates their reception of him and his successor. He does not, observe, charge them with rejecting the kingdom of God, but with not entering it in the right spirit, the result of which we know to have been that but few of them persevered in their loyalty to it. And do we not find this wrong spirit exemplified even in the apostles? In their quarrels about precedence, in their suggestions of vengeance on the disobedient, in their anticipations of earthly rule and splendour, do we not see the best explanation of the character of those violent men who take the kingdom of heaven by force? whilst in their gradual transformation in the spirit of their minds we read the fullest proof of God's omnipotent forbearance, which, out of materials so rude and stubborn, at length wrought out those marvels of gentleness and patience and loving self-sacrifice, whose firm, calm, intense conviction, transmitted through generations, at last subdued the ancient world and planted the cross upon the throne.

Yet, defective as the spirit of even the most devoted servants of the kingdom was at first, much

more of the crowds that seemed to press into that kingdom by violence, and little permanent as was its effect on most of those who entered it, any interest in divine things, any mode of welcoming God's promises and messengers, is better than that captious discontent which nothing can appease, and which, now as then, makes the bulk of mankind quarrel with spiritual truth under every aspect. John came exhibiting in his person the austerity of the repentance which he preached. A people living at ease he endeavoured to rouse to a sense of the worthlessness of mere sensual enjoyment, by offering the spectacle of one who eschewed not only the comforts but even what are generally considered the necessaries of life. Not as though there was any intrinsic virtue in a dress of sackcloth and a diet of locusts and wild honey; not as though in nourishing food and wine and the common indulgences of the senses there was any intrinsic sinfulness; but that the preacher of repentance might inculcate by his very aspect and habits the expedience of refraining even from things lawful for a time, in order to put the mind in better training. But this purpose was lost on the majority; half-jestingly, half-pityingly they said, "He hath a demon": he is possessed: why

listen to a madman? The Son of man, on the other hand, came the embodiment of a higher ideal—the ideal of peace with God and thankful acceptance of all His bounties: He ate and drank such things as were set before Him; He was not ashamed to sit down along with those whose very touch was contamination to the haughty Pharisee; knowing that they too had souls to save, He was ready to accept the first signs of penitence even in the most abandoned. And what was His reward? The very persons who had censured or ridiculed John's ascetic ways now turned on the Redeemer for being different, and said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber: a friend of publicans and sinners," of cheats and profligates!

And so it is in all generations. We should be strangely mistaken did we suppose this melancholy captiousness a peculiar prerogative of the Jews in our Saviour's days. It never fails in human history; for it has its root deep down in the human heart. "Men," said St. Paul with truth, "did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge." And the same applies to every disclosure of God's mind and will. There are those (and I fear, I must add, they are the majority) who do not really *like* it, and do not

choose to do it. Hence it is an altogether false dictum that men are not responsible for their opinions; that they cannot help believing or disbelieving. It is precisely because belief and disbelief are concerned that they *can* help it. If it were demonstration, the thing would be different. Men cannot, of course, help believing a proposition in Euclid, if they are capable of understanding it: or rather, they do not believe it at all; they know it to be true. Absolute certainty shuts out belief. But there is no absolute certainty attainable except in mathematics, and therefore, in weighing conflicting evidence, in deciding according to its preponderance this way or that, there is enormous scope for the inclinations and the wishes, and the will is swayed by them to a degree no one is at all aware of. I know no more silly, and at the same time no more dangerous, falsehood than this, that men are not responsible for their opinions because they cannot help them. They can and do help having opinions they do not like to have; they determine in most cases according to their secret wishes, and not merely according to the evidence. Can any one read the history of unbelief within these last thirty years without seeing this exemplified? The eagerness with which an

hypothesis was welcomed which seemed to dispense with a Deity—which certainly put Him out of sight; the chorus of applause which was raised almost before the theory had time to be understood, long before it had time to be tested; the shutting of the eyes against the numerous difficulties that careful examination might have detected in it; the outrageous claims preferred on its behalf by so-called "scientists," including an actual proposal on the part of one of them to sweep out Christianity from all state-controlled schools, and introduce in place of the cosmogony of Moses the cosmogony of Haeckel! It is utterly absurd to say that inclination had nothing to do with this outburst of scientific unbelief—an outburst the violence of which, I venture to predict, will be paralleled by its brevity.

Of course it may be retorted that people may believe just as well as disbelieve, because they wish to do so. And doubtless this is true: though I am quite certain that in numerous cases belief is actually made more difficult by inclination, by the feeling that the message of God's love and of eternal life is literally too good to be true. And this is a feeling which has very much increased of late. But, in either way, belief is much at the mercy of our inclina-

tions, and hence it is so important that we should keep those inclinations pure. "He that is willing, he that really desires to do the will of God," said Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

This willingness is not, indeed, demonstrable; one cannot with categorical precision say, This man is willing, that man is not. But, on the whole, the wish to do the divine will must ensure the wish to ascertain it; and this will lead to a very different, to a much more cautious and less hasty procedure on the part of earnest seekers after truth. And this earnestness and anxiety will stamp themselves even on the demeanour of the man. His seeking after God will make itself felt and known in some degree to all. And the spectacle of a mind as yet poised in doubt, or anxiously examining, amidst all the tremendous difficulties which the late sudden eruption of new thoughts and theories has engendered; the spectacle of a mind cautious and reverent, shrinking instinctively from the coarse presumption now so common in these matters, conscious of their full importance and labouring to arrive at clearer vision, —such a spectacle is indeed one worthy of the gods, and he who presents it will never be confounded;

while, on the other hand, the brutal callousness of so many to all higher things, the purely animal force with which they go on their way rejoicing, trampling on those who are weaker than themselves, having no good word for any, but always sure to find some blot in the best cause, the noblest character, the most sublime enthusiasm; the captiousness that nothing can please, that turns every appeal into ridicule, and cares not for the infinite distress of finer and tenderer, if also weaker natures; this melancholy character which, were Jesus and His forerunner to reappear on earth, would treat them just as the majority of their contemporaries treated them; — how shall it stand in the day of judgment, how shall it assert itself when the Judge appeareth?

For a judgment there assuredly will be if there be a God to judge; the piteous sighing of the needy, the wrongs of the oppressed, the numberless ills of which no human laws can take account, the cry of the creature for deliverance from the bondage of corruption, these things are not unheeded by the Father of the spirits of all flesh. There will come a day when all shall be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; when He who knows our

wants, our sorrows, our temptations, with all the sympathy of man, and who searches our hearts with all the certainty of God, shall separate those who are capable of heavenly things and take them into that place, alien from this world of phenomena, where God is the light in whom all is seen and all is known, and shall consign those who have refused the higher and grovelled in the lower, with all their powers of intellect and will and energy, to that outer darkness, that final dissolution which awaits the whole of this visible universe within which their intellect, their views, and their desires have all been banned. "I have said, ye are gods, and ye are all the children of the most Highest; but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes!" The divinity of your origin, the splendour of your intellect, the grandeur of your career, shall not save you. You have chosen this life as your highest good, and beyond it you have no portion.

XI

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST A PROOF OF HIS MISSION

What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?
MATT. xxii. 42.

THE Pharisees and Sadducees had been teasing our Lord with captious and ensnaring questions, intended to lead Him either into discredit or into danger; and He now retorts on them with the question in my text, a question intended, however, not to ensnare, but to instruct. The mind of the nation was full of anticipation of deliverance and conquest, to be achieved under the rule of the Messiah. Of these anticipations the 110th Psalm, generally ascribed to David, and certainly extremely ancient, was one of the most authentic vouchers; and accordingly our Lord asked them with regard to the Person described in it, what idea they entertained

about Him and His nature? Whose Son was He to be? What was to be His origin? They answered at once, The Son of David. How then, returned Jesus, doth David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, call Him his Lord; his Sovereign and Master; as he certainly does in the words, "Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"? How can He be at once his Son and his Sovereign? The difficulty seems far less to us than it would do to Orientals, bred up, as they always are, in habits of the most reverential submission to their parents; insomuch that, to this day, in Eastern countries no son, of whatever age, would sit down unbidden in his father's presence. The drift of our Saviour's question was therefore to lead them to the idea that, if the Messiah they expected was to be the Son of David, He was also to be something more. But though the doctrine of the Messiah's higher nature was unmistakably conveyed not only by the passage in the 110th Psalm, but in the still clearer words of Isaiah, when he speaks of the Great Deliverer as the Wonderful, the Councillor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace, as well as in the description of the Person who is brought unto

the Ancient of Days in the book of Daniel, and to whom is committed the judgment of the world and the setting up of an eternal kingdom,—in spite of these and other passages, the Jewish mind had by the time of Christ become so absorbed in the one idea of the unity of God, which they had developed into the incommunicability of His essence, as to lose all hold on the truth that the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed King of their almost agonising expectations, should be something more than man; should indeed be a disclosure of the Godhead in the person of a man. And so they could not answer Him a word when brought face to face with the difficulty which their own development of doctrine had created; they were silenced, though they were not convinced; from that day forth they durst ask Him no more questions, though their resentment was probably inflamed by their defeat.

I wish this morning to speak to you on the *internal* evidence of the truth of Christianity, especially the evidence supplied by the historic character of Christ. You will therefore perceive that I have not chosen the text or motto for my sermon in the meaning which it really bears. I have chosen it in the sense which it appears to bear

to the common reader of the Authorised Version. What think ye of Christ? of the man Jesus, whose claims to reverence we implicitly confess by the very act of assembling here, but whom there are possibly some here who do not worship, some, perhaps, who do not even venerate? What think ye of Jesus? whose Son is He? The Son of God, as well as the Son of David, as He claimed He was; or the Son of—what shall I call it? How venture to describe it?—Falsehood, Imposture? or the Son of Illusion, Madness? Is He to be deemed a Superhuman Character, a Revelation of the Supreme? or a Deceiver? or a Fanatic?

This is the threefold alternative, as I conceive, of which we have our choice.

I am aware that the softness of our age, which we generally call refinement, shrinks from this naked statement. A pleasing and ingenious writer who disbelieves in the miraculous, and to whom our Saviour is therefore merely a human being, without any commission from God,—for how, indeed, can a mere "stream of tendency" commission any one?—has talked much of the "sweet reasonableness" of Jesus; it is with him a standing phrase. But I fail to see the "reasonableness" of a man who, being

nothing beyond a man, spoke of Himself as Jesus did; who told the Sanhedrin to expect His coming in the clouds of heaven, and described Himself to His followers as sitting in judgment hereafter on the human race. Such sayings are no sign of "reasonableness," if Jesus were but a man. They are words of blasphemous presumption, inexcusable save on the plea of madness; and more than justified the Sanhedrin in condemning Him. Nor is there much "sweetness" in the declaration, "Whoso loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." And these are not isolated and singular expressions. They concur with the whole drift of His teaching. It will not do, therefore, to accept some things in the Gospels as the genuine words and acts of Jesus, and to reject others as spurious, thus getting rid of what may be inconvenient. For the whole of His recorded acts and words hang together, and the more carefully they are examined the more consistent with each other do they prove. The mangling process by which the Gospels are cut in pieces, and bits selected here and there as genuine, is not merely in the highest degree capricious and uncritical; it is useless, because even the pieces selected as genuine because they are not inconvenient

to the critic, really speak in the same authoritative tone, and suppose, if they do not fully express, the same claims as those parts which he discards.

Let me remark in passing that this method of treating historic documents, if it ever becomes general, will be a death-blow to historical research. Far different was the method of the great historian, —the greatest, with perhaps the exception of our own Gibbon, that has ever lived, and who has quite lately passed away, full of years and honours. In his very last and greatest work, which was to have crowned his lifelong labours, and which, though left unfinished, is the grandest review ever yet made of the past doings of historic man, Ranke avows himself, and that on historic grounds, a firm believer in Jesus Christ and in His mission, as recorded in the Gospels and accepted by the Church.

The fact is, that no human being would have ever cast a doubt on the truth of the facts recorded, with but slight and inconsiderable variations, in the Gospels, were it not for the miraculous element therein. "Miracles don't happen;" and this dictum of Matthew Arnold has been represented by his niece in a clever novel as deciding the crisis of her hero's life. "Miracles don't happen;" the inference intended to

be made being, of course, that miracles never did happen. It is almost unnecessary to point out to such an audience that this inference simply begs the question which requires to be proved. What would you think of a traveller who, on being shown an extinct volcano, should say, "Oh, I don't see anything going on now; all is peace and quiet; there is no appearance of fire or smoke or red-hot cinders. You tell me these things did happen some centuries ago; but they are not happening now, and I won't believe they ever did happen." Yet would not the reasoning be just as good in the one case as in the other? Are we really to believe that nothing happened in former times that is not happening now? The Church, Christianity itself, is such an extinct volcano. Miracles originated it; it sprang from the womb of miraculous intervention, short of which nothing could have founded it and started it on its career of triumph; miracles moulded it. But they are now gone; just as the subterranean fires are gone which centuries or millenniums ago shaped the cone or the crater of the mountain whose sides now sleep in verdure. Miracles have passed away —for the present, as the volcanic fires have, likewise for the present, passed away; but who can tell when

they may be again required; when the fierce glow shall again appear, and the awful display of uncontrollable power shall again assert itself?

The writer I have quoted does, indeed, only express what he believes to be the creed of science on this subject. But science does not speak with one voice upon it; there are many men, and that of the very highest scientific eminence, who believe far differently. Nor can science have any creed at all with respect to the miraculous, without outstepping her own domain, and intruding into that of theology, by denying the existence of a God; a denial which becomes absurd in face of the discovery of the degradation or gradual diminution of available energy in the Universe, in consequence of which all things will ultimately come to a standstill if left to themselves. For what will ultimately cease to move must have at some time begun to move; and this beginning of motion must have been impressed upon it by something outside itself; and this something is what men call God. However, as to some scientific men the miraculous is a real difficulty, and as to most reflecting persons a *modus vivendi*, so to speak, between science and supernatural religion seems a desideratum, I trust you will indulge me

with your attention whilst I say a few words upon the subject.

The uniformity of nature is the postulate of science; without its being granted, science becomes impossible. But the uniformity of nature is not violated by the interposition of the human will, though the human will has intervened to such an extent as to change the very face of nature. For instance, by the clearing away of the forests which once covered the continent of Europe, the climate of Europe has been altered; and the same thing is at this moment going on in America. No one doubts or denies facts like these. Yet the actual intervention of the human *will*, as distinguished from the human *act*, cannot be seen. It is the *will* that sets the muscles in motion, and they perform the visible action; but the intervention of the *will* to set those muscles in motion has never yet been seen, and most probably never will be seen. Now, if the human will can intervene in the course of nature, which is thereby deflected from what it otherwise would be, why may not the divine will intervene as well? What is the difference between the two cases, except this, that of the intervention of the human will we are conscious in ourselves, and

therefore believe it to exist in other creatures like ourselves; whilst of the intervention of the divine will we cannot, of course, be conscious? But are we, on that account, to suppose that the Creator has less power to intervene in His own creation than we, His creatures, have; that He is actually less able to make use of His own creation, less influential in it, than we, His creatures, are?

Of course we may, if we choose, deny the influence of volition. We may suppose that when we fancy the will dictates such and such an act, it is all an imposture; that volition is not as it seems to us to be, that which precedes and determines action, but something which really follows action; in short, that our consciousness deludes us in every deliberate action of our lives. This course is actually adopted by the automatist. But we must count its cost before we give it our assent. If our *consciousness* deceive us on a matter of such prime importance, then we have no guarantee that our *perceptions* do not deceive us, for consciousness is necessary for perception; and if so, all physical science becomes impossible; we are landed in universal pyrrhonism.

Against the possibility of the divine will inter-

vening, therefore, I can see no valid objection, if we admit the intervention of the human will. For the objection raised by the late Professor Clifford, that the divine will, were there such a will, could not intervene except through the action of a divine brain, because the human will does not intervene except through the action of the human brain, and that no such divine brain exists, this objection is the grossest anthropomorphism.

Let us then apply this principle to the case of miracles.

What is a miracle,—such as those we find in the pages of the New Testament? The most usual conception, I suppose, is that a miracle is a suspension or violation (the two terms really come to the same) of the laws of nature. And it is on this ground, and on this ground alone, that science can, with any plausibility, object to the miraculous. I do not say that science has on this ground any *right* to object to the miraculous. For surely if there be a God who has created what we call nature, He must be allowed the power of dealing with His creation as He pleases, and our notions as to what it were fitting for Him to do in that regard are idle or presumptuous. We cannot prescribe to God or

limit His activity by our ideas of what He ought or ought not to do. Science therefore has no *right* to call the miraculous in question on the ground that it would be unworthy of the Deity to violate or suspend, in single instances, the laws He has impressed upon His creation. These laws must have had a beginning, if the universe itself had a beginning. In many instances these laws are to all appearance arbitrary; they might have been other than they are. There is no discoverable necessity for the relative weights of the different metals; for the atomic proportions in which the different elements combine; for the poisonous properties of some and the salutary influences of other substances. Such laws may be conceived as alterable; they might be different from what they are; they are arbitrary, not necessary; violations of them, not continuous, but occasional, and for adequate purposes, are perfectly conceivable; nor would they in the least interfere with that general uniformity of nature which is, no doubt, essential to science. But is it quite accurate to speak of miracles as being violations of the laws of nature? Let us reflect for a moment, and we shall see that in order to be sure that any given transaction was a violation of the laws of

nature we ought to be thoroughly acquainted with *all* those laws. Else how can we be sure that the supposed violation of one law is not simply the coming into play of another law? As, for instance, when a magnet makes a piece of iron jump up from the ground and cling to it, it does not thereby violate or suspend the law of gravitation, but simply introduces another law, the law of magnetic attraction. If we reflect but for a moment on the subject we shall find that the objection to miracle on the score of its violating the laws of nature, implies that the objector is fully acquainted with all those laws, and therefore can be certain that no law, as yet undiscovered, is brought into play when a miracle is performed. What then, I repeat, is a miracle, such as those we find in the New Testament?

I would answer, It is *the exhibition* of a divine intervention in things *physical*, for the purpose of accrediting a divine intervention in things *spiritual*. Whether that intervention be through the laws of nature or not, we could not possibly tell unless we were acquainted with *all* those laws; which no one will pretend to be. But it must be an *exhibition* of *divine*, not of merely *human* power; else it could be no voucher for what it is intended to reveal or to

corroborate. To say, as Renan does, I will believe a miracle so soon as I see it performed in a scientific laboratory, and repeated *ad libitum* for purposes of experiment, is really to say, I will believe a miracle so soon as it ceases to be a miracle. The conditions he imposes are dishonest; for they destroy the very nature of that which they pretend only to qualify.

Having endeavoured to clear away certain prejudices which would bias our judgment, I now proceed to my proper subject, viz. the evidence to the truth of Christianity afforded by the life and character of Christ. Now the life and character of Christ can only be fully reached through the four memoirs which we call the gospels. In other writings of the New Testament there are many allusions to Christ's career, and these allusions are all perfectly consistent with the accounts of it given in the gospels, which is a very weighty testimony to their truth. Still it is only through the gospels that we can make what we may call Christ's personal acquaintance.

But the gospels, it will be said, are not authentic history. They were written long after the events they narrate, and consequently little dependence can be placed upon them.

If this principle were universally applied, it would destroy almost all history; for very little recorded history was written contemporaneously with the events. For instance, we have no contemporary history for the greater part of the reign of the first Roman emperor, Augustus. In general, recorded history is the tradition of previous times subsequently committed to writing. But in this instance there are particular reasons for trusting the veracity of the gospel narratives, even supposing them not to have been written by eye-witnesses.

It is plain that the four gospels were written by four different authors, of marked individuality. Regarding the fourth gospel no one would deny this. It is equally evident of the three others on a little observation. In the first gospel the words and works of Jesus are massed together with the predominant aim of classifying them. The Sermon on the Mount, the chapters containing the parables illustrative of the kingdom of heaven, the grand prophetic discourse immediately before the Passion, are examples. Again, its tone is predominatingly Jewish, not in the sense of flattering Jewish prejudice, but in the sense of never omitting warnings required by that prejudice, — warnings which the other

synoptists do not record. The second gospel is brief and full of action, and very pictorial. Transactions are vividly presented in their external features or concomitants. The grass is green; the multitudes sit down on it looking like leek-beds; the very Syriac words employed in two miracles are given. The third gospel is the gospel of patient investigation, of faithful, almost slavish accuracy in the repetition of accounts heard from eye-witnesses, on which it professes to be founded; our Lord's sayings are often given without any discoverable connection with the context; they were too precious to be omitted, though the compiler knew not where to place them.[1] And these three gospels all present one or two streams of oral tradition such as that the existence of which the third gospel actually mentions in its introduction; and of whose general correctness those who are aware of the exactness of memory in Eastern countries will feel little doubt, even independently of the fact that they mutually corroborate each other. Of the date of one of these gospels we are almost certain within narrow limits; for it was written by the same writer as the Acts, and the Acts ends

[1] See especially Luke xvi. 14-18.

abruptly with the first imprisonment of St. Paul, between which and his death it was evidently written. The date of the Acts may therefore be considered pretty nearly fixed. The gospel of St. Luke must have preceded it some time, inasmuch as the first chapter of the Acts, though not in the least inconsistent with the last chapter of that gospel, yet contains many additional particulars concerning our Lord's last days on earth, evidently the result of further inquiry and information. The fourth gospel supposes the previous existence of the first three by its careful avoidance of every discourse, and almost of every act, of Christ recorded in them; and if this gospel be not the work of the apostle to whom it is ascribed, it is the most astonishing forgery that ever was produced. This throws the first and the second gospels back to about the same time as the third; and there is nothing against such a date in the fact that the consentient tradition of the early Church ascribed these gospels to the persons whose names they bear; the intrinsic nature of each gospel harmonising exactly with the circumstances and character of the writer to whom each is thus attributed.

I have sketched out the argument for the authenticity of the gospels as it presents itself to a

careful reader of common sense, not biassed by a supposed scientific theory, nor mystified by the vagaries of German criticism — vagaries the less impressive to one who has seen at work the mechanism which almost necessarily produces them.

But the strongest corroborative argument for the authenticity and veracity of the gospels is the unique and perfectly consistent character of Christ which they all present.

You will remember what the officers who had been sent to seize Jesus said in order to excuse themselves from coming back to the Sanhedrin without Him. "Never man spake like this man." Whether they said this or not, it is assuredly true. About Christ's sayings and about Christ's acts there is something perfectly unique. Read any other part of the New Testament, and you feel at once as if you were breathing a different atmosphere. In all Christ says there is a peculiar tone of quiet authority, a conscious dignity, a singular and most impressive mixture of tenderness and sternness. A simplicity and yet an immeasurable depth; an appropriateness to the occasion, and yet a many-sided applicability; a singular plainness and directness of speech, and yet an absolute purity. Above

all, there is implied in them the assertion that Jesus was sinless. He never speaks of sin as if He knew it by His own experience. He is outside it—outside the possibility of it. Read the gospels ever so carelessly, and you must be struck with these characteristics. Again, Christ never hesitates, never balances; He is never for a moment in doubt as to what He shall do or say. He is never at a loss. Now these features appear in *all* the gospels, and they appear in all of them alike; just as much in those portions which are peculiar to one as in those which are common to all. Again, Christ is represented as making certain vast claims; and these claims come out with equal strength in all the gospels. If in the last gospel He asserts His divinity more fully, theologically speaking, does He not in the first gospel say, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father? and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him"? And is not the same claim set up in the confession He makes before the high priest and Sanhedrin? If in the fourth gospel He says that the Father hath committed to Him all judgment, does He not in the first gospel draw a picture of that judgment with Himself as Judge? Time would

fail me were I to attempt enumerating all the characteristics in which all the four gospels coincide. But I must ask your peculiar attention to one complex feature of coincidence, because it is doubly important; important with respect to the truthfulness of the narratives, important with regard to the character of the transactions.

If you will carry your recollection through the miracles recorded in the gospels you will find that they have three characteristics.

1. Not one of them was done for a selfish purpose; to benefit Christ Himself.

2. In every case where a miracle was done to *benefit* its object, faith was required, from himself or his representatives. This rule is absolute. Without faith, St. Mark expressly tells us, Christ could do no miracle of healing. The receptive power was wanting.

3. In two cases, and in only two, Jesus is represented as working a miracle of *destruction*; and in these two cases it was not wrought on human beings. But in these two cases faith was not demanded. God does not ask men's consent to *punish*, though He does ask their consent to *bless*. This seems to be the moral. These features of

Christ's miracles are found in all the gospels, though the reader's attention is never called except to the second of them. Now when we find perfect sameness of principle in four different narratives, running throughout transactions which, though all of the same kind, are not the same in all, without this sameness of principle being obtruded on the reader, in two points, indeed, never even mentioned,—when we perceive that a secret consistency pervades all the four narratives with regard to our Saviour's most important works, it would certainly seem that these narratives are *consistent* simply because they are *true*. And when to these points of coincidence in principle we add the peculiarity of the character which they all exhibit, the faultlessness, not of an ideal drawn to order by the imagination, but of a real, living, breathing, human being, acting and speaking quite naturally, on the spur of the moment, in a way which no one could have *predicted* and which no one could have *bettered*,—when to the *consistency* of these four pictures of Christ we add their intense *reality*, I really cannot see how to explain the phenomenon except in accordance with the tradition of the early Church, which with one consentient voice, from East and West, from North and South,

from Asia Minor, from Gaul, from Italy, and from Africa, held these four gospels to be genuine and contemporaneous memoirs of a life and character equally impossible to invent and to agree upon, were it not in its main features, including the miraculous, actual fact.

Hear the words of John Stuart Mill: "Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure, not more unlike all His precursors than unlike all His followers, even those who had the direct benefit of His personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much that is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of His followers. The tradition of followers suffices to insert any number of marvels, and may have inserted all the miracles He is reported to have wrought. But who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom

nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source."

With one reservation this passage is absolutely true ; and that reservation, I have little doubt, would ultimately have been made by the author himself had he lived to enter the kingdom of God in this world, as we trust that one so near it must have entered it in the next. Mill speaks of our Lord's miracles as mere marvels, which might easily have been inserted by subsequent invention. This shows that he never carefully examined them, never discovered their principle nor their ethical significance. They cannot be torn from the character they illustrate, from the mission they avouch. When our Lord raises the paralytic from his sick-bed in order to establish His claim to forgive sins, when He appeals to the works He has done, and is doing, as the authentic tokens of His mission, what right has criticism to expunge these words and works of Christ from the number of His genuine acts? No right whatever, except the dictum that miracles are impossible,—a position impossible to prove, and theoretically abandoned by most modern "scientists," though for the sake of it history must be tampered

with, and our Lord's sayings mutilated, in order that we may feel justified in entertaining that respect for Him which nothing short of brutality will now deny.

But there is one miracle which by no conceivable process can be eliminated from the Gospel picture of our Lord's career, a miracle which could not have been subsequently slipped into it, because the whole structure of Christianity is based upon it. It is the crowning miracle of the Resurrection. Unless the apostles and earliest disciples had been firmly convinced of their Master's having risen from the dead, the Church would never have been founded. "No fact in history," says the sceptical Volkmar, "no fact in history is more certain than this, that the apostles firmly believed they had seen their Master alive in the body after His crucifixion." Had they not believed this, they would have returned to their fishing on the Lake of Galilee, disappointed, disillusionised, heart-broken. *Now what could have made them believe this if it were not fact?* What possible ground for believing it could they have had save its being fact? To imagine they were firmly convinced (as no doubt they were convinced) of His Resurrection, and that they preached it to others, as

we are aware they did, with immense success, on no better grounds than unbelievers now suggest,—at least those unbelievers who are not too wary to commit themselves to some attempt at explanation, —to imagine that they took the whisper of the wind coming in at an open lattice, or the appearance of a mere stranger on the beach of the lake, or the strong persuasion that so good a man could not be really dead, that he must somehow be alive,—to imagine that they took such things as sufficient proof that Christ was actually alive again, and that this undoubting, unswerving belief in His Resurrection rested on no better ground than such figments as these, is to insult the human understanding; it is the veriest trifling. Yet these are actually three solutions of this enormous difficulty, propounded by three distinguished unbelievers of modern times, French, German, and English respectively. And nothing could more forcibly exhibit the straits into which people are driven who set aside the plain testimony of history in subservience to what they suppose to be a scientific dogma,—a dogma, however, which real science never has taught, and never will. The testimony of history, I say, quite independent of the four gospels; for had they perished,

it would not be the less certain that the Church, which is a historical phenomenon, never would have existed but for the firm belief in their Master's Resurrection entertained by all its founders.

To return, however, to the gospels. Strong as it is in itself, the argument, from the nature and consistency of the four gospels, derives additional strength from a comparison between them and the Apocryphal Gospels. These strange documents actually originated in the latter part of the second century or thereabouts, the very time to which the infidel theory finds it necessary to relegate the Canonical Gospels. They are therefore samples of what the "creative faculty" of those times was able to produce. They have lately been translated, and are therefore accessible to all.

In these forgeries you will find every feature of Christ's character defaced or destroyed. He works miracles the most fantastic, for the most fantastic purposes. The gracious countenance of the Man of Sorrows is distorted with passion and clouded with selfishness; in His childhood His parents are in terror of Him; He is a mischievous and capricious boy, armed with omnipotence; He kills a playfellow, and then at the

trembling intercession of His mother, raises him again to life. Such are the results of imagination, when imagination went to work. Worthless in themselves, these false gospels seem to have been preserved for the very purpose of avouching by contrast what is true.

And what obtains of them obtains in a measure of all the Christian writers after the apostolic age Not one of them betrays a trace of the peculiar and unequalled power that would have been required to conceive and draw from the imagination a portrait such as the four gospels all consent in. And we are asked, forsooth, to believe that not *one* only, but *four* different writers possessed this consummate power, and produced four different and yet harmonious works without a single flaw in the character they depict!

If it be said that their presentation of Christ's character is consentaneous because it is the product of a consentaneous tradition, common sense will ask, How then came this consentaneous tradition to arise and assert itself, as it did in these four gospels, throughout the Church? I need not waste words in showing up the answer given to this question by the mythical theory, since the very deviser of that

theory, in his latest book upon the subject, has abandoned it. In fact, the notion that the conception and presentation of a perfect character could evolve itself out of the ideals entertained by a number of scattered congregations of illiterate and uncultivated persons, mostly of the lower class, dispersed over Palestine, Greece, and Asia Minor, and actually in a very few years come to be considered as the history of a real person, is so ineffably absurd when it is condensed out of the ingenious verbiage in which it was originally conveyed by Strauss, that, as with most absurdities, confutation of it is equally unnecessary and impossible.

Taking then the Gospel narratives as history, not fiction or myth, as on the whole reliable "Memoirs of the Apostles," as Justin Martyr seems to call them, let us see what conclusion we are driven to.

On the one side, all is plain and easy. If Christ be what Christendom at large has taken Him to be, the Son of God, come into the world to save the world from sin and to introduce into it a higher life, then all these singular characteristics of His words and acts are natural, exactly what we can acquiesce in, now that we know about them, though

we could not have imagined them beforehand; then the sudden change of the apostles from despair to triumph after their Master's crucifixion, and their astonishing success in preaching His Resurrection is entirely explained and fully justified. And surely it is a very strong reason for accepting the Church's belief concerning Christ, that the origin and progress and triumph of the Church are best explained by it. On the other hand, in order to carry out the dogma that miracles are impossible,—a dogma to establish which would require a full knowledge of all the laws of nature, in other words, omniscience,—in order, I say, to carry out this hypothesis, you must arbitrarily manipulate the Gospel narratives, cutting out exactly those portions which are necessary to a full understanding of the rest, reducing the character of Christ Himself to something I do not like to name, and making the origin and success of Christianity quite unaccountable.

One crowning difficulty in the infidel hypothesis I would adduce at the close of a discourse which I fear has been too protracted, but which I could not well abridge.

We are continually invited to "take and eat"

what is described by Christ Himself as being "His body"; to drink, all of us without exception, what He describes as being "His blood." Into the theological subtleties that have been imported into these words I will not enter; what I wish to put before you is, the impossibility of any one who believed himself to be merely a teacher, however wise and good, giving such a command as this. What mere teacher would have ever told his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood? No unbeliever has so far given any consistent explanation of this strange, this absolutely unparalleled injunction.

If Christ were God as well as man, as His citation of the 110th Psalm and many other sayings show He believed Himself to be, then this strange command may be in some degree appreciated, though not fully understood. The flesh of certain sacrifices was directed to be eaten by those who offered them. The blood, in which was the life (as the Pentateuch, with a singular anticipation of modern physiology, declares), was to be poured out on the ground; it was reserved for God alone. Thus we perceive some analogy between the Jewish ritual and the Lord's Supper. For Christ repeatedly spoke of Himself as

giving His life as a sacrifice for men's sins. The symbolic action of the Eucharist was intended, therefore, to denote this stupendous sacrifice, and the appropriation of its benefits by those receiving it. But who but Christ ever dreamed of such an institution, with such directions and such an explanation? Well might the waverers, who were but half convinced of the divinity of His mission, stop short aghast when they heard Him speak of eating His flesh and drinking His blood as being necessary for eternal life![1]

Now this strange rite was certainly founded by Christ Himself immediately before His arraignment and crucifixion. We have it given at length in the three first gospels; we have it in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, written probably years before any of the gospels; we have it in that remarkable relic of extreme antiquity, published to the world quite recently, the διδαχή or Doctrine of the Lord through the twelve apostles; it has been observed by the universal Church of Christ, by all who profess and call themselves Christians (except one insignificant and fast-dying sect[2]), from the first age of Christianity to the present time, and will

[1] See John vi. 66.

[2] The Quakers or Friends.

doubtless be observed till the Church shall disappear from off the earth together with the race of man. But who, I repeat, would have ever dreamed of establishing such a rite except one who felt that in *Himself*, not in His teaching, not in His words, but in *Himself*, in *His own Person*, resided that life which He promised to all His followers? And if He felt this, how could He have come to feel it,—not only to be convinced of it, but to *feel* it,—unless it were the truth?

If, indeed, Christ be not the Lamb of God, the great and all-suffering propitiation, the sacrifice of which all other sacrifices are but shadows; slain in the counsels of the Eternal from the foundation of the world, though only manifested in the fulness of the time, then Christ, as exhibited in the institution of the Eucharist, is not a teacher, fraught with mild wisdom and speaking with the authority of supreme good sense, but *a wild and presumptuous fanatic*.

There is probably not a soul here present who does not recoil from this alternative. And yet it is a mere logical necessity. We cannot escape from it by shutting our eyes to it; by pretty generalities and fine stock phrases. We must face it, as know-

ing that facts demand recognition, and that we shall be judged according to the way in which we have recognised and used them. We cannot evade this in the things of time. We cannot evade it in the things of eternity.

XII

CONFESSION

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.—Ps. xxxii. 5.

The 32d Psalm is devoted to celebrating the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord doth not impute his iniquity, because in his spirit there is no guile; the happiness of him whose sins are forgiven because he sincerely repents of them and thoroughly confesses them. The whole psalm is merely an expansion of this idea, and an exhortation to follow this example. When the Psalmist kept silence, when he as yet could not bring himself to confess the sin of which he was in secret conscious, his very bones waxed old through his groaning all the day long. For the hand of God

was mercifully heavy on him day and night; his moisture was turned into the drought of summer by the fever that consumed him. Under these circumstances then, when, amidst all the pomp of royalty, his soul was shrivelled up by inward misery, David at length determined to throw himself upon God by a frank and full confession. He acknowledged his faults, and his iniquity he no longer attempted, but in vain, to hide. He said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;" and so, he adds, as if it were an instantaneously felt result, "Thou, O God, forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

The immediacy, the freeness and fulness, the unconditioning generosity with which God pardons the true penitent, is thus the theme of this most evangelical psalm—a psalm the more astonishing when one reflects that without the Great Sacrifice it is impossible that it should ever have been true. For without the death of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world the laws of nature, which are never violated or suspended, would have had their way in the necessary punishment of the offender; and that punishment would only have been exhausted by his destruction. He that hath died, and He alone, is "justified" from sin — hath paid its

penalty, in other words; and death apart from Christ means nothing but extinction.

I do not, however, intend to dwell on the singular anticipation of the Gospel which this psalm, apparently ignorant of the sacrificial system of the law, certainly ignoring it, betrays. I am at present rather concerned to apply its doctrine to the subject of the confession of sins in general; a subject peculiarly important now, because efforts have been made, are perhaps still making in our Church to reintroduce a system from which it used to be thought the English mind had for ever freed itself. This system represents the Deity as not being in general immediately accessible to penitents; as requiring in almost every case the intervention of one of His ordained ministers to convey the pardon, which, it is allowed, must ultimately flow from Him. Books and tracts recommending this conception have been of late years largely disseminated in our Church; and the very peculiar form used in the Anglican Communion, and in hers alone, for the ordination of priests or presbyters, has been urged as an evidence that such recommendations express the mind of the Church of England and of her derivatives.

Probably the best method of approaching a sub-

ject of such intricacy will be the historical; and I therefore invite you to review with me the history of Confession and Absolution from the earliest ages. In doing this it will be necessary to be as brief as possible; but the main points are sufficiently salient, and when once seen will leave little room for doubt.

In the earliest Church, then, beyond that confession of sin which every Christian has always felt it a duty and a privilege to make to God in secret, and that mutual confession of sins to each other which is recommended by St. James,—beyond these, I say, we find no trace of any confession except that made in public before the whole Church, and which was only made in the case of the three great offences called mortal sins, and which were so denominated because their commission was supposed to involve the extinction of the divine principle in the soul,—I mean murder, adultery, and apostasy. Persons who were known to have committed any one of those tremendous sins were at once excluded from the Church, and only readmitted on their sincere and deep repentance—a repentance the sincerity of which became gradually tested by a longer and longer deprivation of all Christian privileges. Yet was

this exclusion not merely penal. If they were separated from God as revealed and imparted in His Church, and were handed over to the adversary, though it was for the destruction of the body, it was also for the ultimate salvation of the soul; and hence readmission when true penitence had been secured was part and parcel of the Christian system. So with the incestuous Corinthian; the apostle urged the Church at once to readmit him whose true penitence was avouched by his evident grief, lest, losing the assurance of God's love, he should be swallowed up by over-much sorrow. No limit seems to have been at first set to the action of the Church in such cases, either as to the period of exclusion or as to the number of times that readmission might be granted; though the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a book probably of the second century, speaks of there being but one penitence to the servants of God. But in the middle of the third century, after the great Decian persecution, we find suddenly two opposite ideas started. The one declared that such persons must be left to God alone; that, without presuming to limit His mercy, the Church had no further authority to intervene; that it might be lawful to pray for such, but was not lawful to readmit

such. They were to be left to God's uncovenanted mercies. The other party compounded matters with this more rigorous view, by stopping at a single readmission. If a person once excluded and then readmitted should offend in like manner a second time, he forfeited the pardon of the Church for ever; about his eternal fate the Church at first did not venture to dogmatise, but as time advanced it was boldly pronounced that, inasmuch as outside the Church is no salvation, so relapsed sinners being for ever outside the Church on earth, could hope for no mercy hereafter. As to the absolution imparted in such cases, it was simply the act of solemnly readmitting to communion. The penitent was brought up to that part of the edifice appropriated to communicants, and there welcomed by the bishop with the kiss of peace and the impartation of the consecrated bread and wine. No particular form of words was needed; the restoration to the highest Church privilege expressed and sealed the divine forgiveness. And hence in the most ancient Greek Liturgies, as in the Canon of the Mass in the Latin Church, which is the most ancient and venerable part of its Liturgy, there is no trace of any form of absolution such as we use in our communion

office. The reception of the elements was the absolution.

An intermediate step was, however, soon introduced. Many persons might offend more or less seriously, yet short of those "mortal" sins which involved absolute severance from the Christian community. Such persons were accordingly suspended from communion for longer or shorter periods; and no limit seems to have been set to the number of such temporary suspensions and readmissions.

But as men's consciences became more educated by Christianity, it would be more clearly seen that, after all, external acts were not the only ways in which great sins could be committed; and the thought would rack many a tender conscience when he saw some open and notorious offender weeping in penitence at the church door, that he himself might have been quite as guilty in intention as the penitent had been in act; that, therefore, he had really no better right to receive the communion than had the more notorious offender who was openly excluded from it. Hence would arise naturally and justly one form of that difficulty of quieting the conscience which is mentioned in

one of our exhortations to the communion, and the assistance of one of God's ministers would be the natural recourse of the perplexed. Accordingly Origen, writing about that time (if his Latin translator is to be trusted), advises carefulness in the choice of the person to whom the difficulties of the believer are to be imparted,—imparted not for the sake of obtaining an absolution of which in those days no trace can as yet be found, but for the purpose of obtaining such advice as shall relieve his conscience.

Towards the close of the next century we find at Constantinople a regular penitentiary priest established, whose duty it was to receive the confessions of those troubled in conscience and, what is to be carefully noted, to make them known to the Church in order to obtain for the penitent the prayers of the congregation. But how little essential this office was deemed is plain from the fact that, in consequence of a scandal created by this divulgement of sin in public, an archbishop who had filled an exalted lay office throughout the greater part of a long life, and who seems to have carried into the ministry much of that secular prudence in which mere ecclesiastics often fail, abolished the office of

penitentiary; and his successor, John Chrysostom, a man of uncompromising ecclesiasticism, so far from attempting to revive it, constantly exhorted the people to confess their sins to God, and not to be discouraged by the lack of a human confessor or director. Nor was the office ever revived in the Eastern Church; in which, indeed, the practice of private confession seems to have had no provision made for it till comparatively recent times. In the Western Church, half a century after the singular occurrence to which I have adverted, we find the first ascertainable approach to the secret confession of sins involving temporary suspension from communion. A rescript of Pope Leo the Great addressed to the bishops of Campania declares that it cannot be necessary for congregations to be scandalised by the publication of the offences for which their prayers are asked; that it is sufficient if the priests know these things and request the prayers of the Church in general terms for the offender; absolution still consisting simply in readmission to communion, and being the act of the whole Church through the bishop, who alone possessed the power of readmitting to communion except in cases of urgency, *e.g.* upon a death-bed.

As time advanced the idea of classifying offences was started, in order that the longer or shorter period of suspension from communion might be adapted to the greater or less malignity of each offence. And as the sorrow of the penitent had been naturally expressed by those external actions which conventionally express sorrow, by tears and cries and going barefoot and in squalid dress, and by abstaining from all pleasant food, so these acts were classified and assigned in different proportions to each different offence; whilst at the same time prescribed forms of prayer for the restoration of the penitent to the favour of his offended God were composed to be said by the priest, as he knelt along with the penitent, in full presence of the congregation, before that altar from which he was as yet excluded. Such a form is the prayer in our own visitation office which immediately follows the absolution, a prayer which originally was a request that God would restore to the communion of the Church the sick member who had by some weightier sin virtually excluded himself therefrom. This prayer, which is of high antiquity, faithfully represents the real and only form of absolution from sins pronounced in the ancient Latin Church. A further

and very natural, though most important, alteration was made, by allowing the penitent to communicate immediately after confessing, on his undertaking to perform subsequently whatever penance might be enjoined. This, which was a corollary from re-admitting penitents on a sick-bed, was followed in the seventh century by what I can only characterise as a mischievous degradation,—by allowing the penitent to commute the penance for a gift of money to the Church, or even to have penance performed for him by his dependants. Thus penance was made easy for the rich; and in defiance of the words of Christ, they were taught to trust in their riches as a valuable assistance in entering the kingdom of heaven. No doubt numbers of pious foundations owe their origin to this commutation of penance, which is generally ascribed to the great Greek archbishop who first divided England into parishes; but the over-ruling providence of God which brings good out of evil does not authorise us to call evil good.

Thus far, however, confession and subsequent absolution had in view merely the restoration of the penitent to the peace of God and of the Church, his reintroduction to the full enjoyment of those

privileges which he had forfeited, and his confirmation in all goodness through their enjoyment.

But matters were now ripe for a change. The constant practice of secret confession for the purpose of obtaining a public absolution in the shape of readmission to Church privileges, had paved the way for secret confession for the purpose of obtaining a private absolution, to which the presence of the congregation was unnecessary; and in the year 1215 a memorable change was dictated by the great Pope Innocent the Third to the fourth Lateran Council. The absolution which up to that date had been necessary only to *regain* communion when communion had been lost, was now made necessary in order to *retain* communion, to prevent its being lost. It was decreed that every Christian of adult years was henceforth to confess *all* his sins to his parish priest at least once a year before Easter, and that unless he did this he was, without any other reason, to be excluded from communion. Thus absolution changed its character completely, becoming the necessary vestibule without passing through which no one might approach the altar, instead of being, as at first, readmission to that altar after being, for some notorious sin, formally forbidden

to approach it. No wonder that so novel a decree required being repeatedly published to the world and enforced on the faithful, as the decree itself enjoins it shall be. And as the meaning of absolution was now entirely changed, so the form of it was likewise changed. The top-stone was placed on the edifice when, in the provincial Synod of London in the year 1268, under the presidency of an Italian cardinal, the indicative or judicial form was substituted for the ancient precatory form; and the prayer for the sinner, which Radulfus the Ardent only a century before had declared to be the only form admissible, was turned into the style now used, "I absolve thee from all thy sins," the Church subsequently, in strange forgetfulness of her own previous practice, declaring that unless this judicial form be used, the absolution granted is invalid.

It is not wonderful that a power so novel, vested in the priest of every parish, should have suggested the desirableness of introducing into the ordination office something that might sanction it. Accordingly, about a hundred years still later, and consequently not much more than five hundred years before our days, there were added to the ordination office the words, modified from those addressed by Christ to

the whole body of His apostles in the twentieth of St. John, "Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins thou dost remit they are remitted, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained." These words had been used for centuries before in the Latin office for consecrating bishops; but they were used in a way which shows that they were originally taken in a quite different sense. Deprived of the commencing address, "Receive the Holy Ghost," which St. Augustine considers too daring for any human being except our blessed Lord to use, the next following words were thus quoted in the consecration prayer: "May the sins of those whose sins he retains, be retained; and the sins of those whose sins he remits, do Thou, O Lord, remit." So used, the words evidently allude to the power exercised by none but bishops of excluding or suspending from communion, and again restoring on what appeared to be sincere repentance; and they are a prayer to God not merely to ratify the newly consecrated bishop's application of the censures of the Church, but also to accompany his action in taking off those censures with that forgiveness which God alone can grant. But now that absolution was no longer the properly episcopal act of restoring to Church fellowship, but the

pronouncement by the priest of a forgiveness of sins secretly confessed to himself alone, and in pronouncing which he assumed the place of God as judge,—now, I say, the bishop was made to delegate to the priest, when he ordained him, a power *which he had literally never claimed himself.*

I have said that this form was *added* to the Latin office for ordaining priests. It was *added* to it, not introduced into it; nor was the office in any way modified by this addition. The act of ordination in the Latin Church is completed before it. When the newly-ordained priests have acted with the bishops as co-celebrants in the Eucharist, according to the remarkable custom of the Latin Church; when all have received the Eucharist, thus jointly consecrated, —then, and not till then, do the newly ordained priests kneel down, each in his turn, before the bishop, who, acting now alone, and not with the accompaniment of the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, as before when he was ordaining them, lays his hands on the head of each, and delegates to each the awful power of remitting and retaining sins.

Thus you perceive that in the Latin Church service the words in question occupy an altogether different position, and in so far would seem to bear

an entirely different meaning from the position they occupy and the meaning they have in our Church; being there used not to confer the priesthood, but to confer a certain power not in itself inherent in the priesthood. And with this agrees the practice of the modern Greek Church; for she recently has added to her occasional offices one for constituting a "spiritual person," *i.e.* a person who is empowered to hear private confession and to grant private absolution; this power not inhering in a priest by virtue of his ordination. That this form was imitated from the appendix to the Latin ordination office which I have described seems to me extremely probable; its recency is betrayed by its not being found at all in Greek service books printed only two centuries ago.

With the modesty which very remarkably distinguishes the Greek services from those of the Latin Church, though our Saviour's words are cited in the short office I have described, they are cited in a prayer and are not addressed to the individual who is to be entrusted with the duty of confessor. Similarly the absolution pronounced by the Greek Church on a penitent is likewise in that precatory form which has been abandoned by the Latin Church

for the last five centuries, and has at length been declared by that Church to be invalid.

With the tenacious conservatism that distinguishes the Roman Church,—for she never alters, but only overlays,—that Church has retained in her Pontifical a form for the public reconciliation or reception of penitents. But this form, instead of being used in the case of all "mortal" sins, as it would be if the practice of the early Church were carried out, is only used at present in the case of reconciling apostates who may have returned to their allegiance to the Church; and as the Church ever since the third century decided that such readmission could only be granted once, the public reconciliation of a heretic was of itself a proclamation that, if he lapsed a second time, he had no mercy to expect. Thus the compromise which the Church made with the Puritanism of the third century became indirectly the cause of those terrible scenes which figure so largely in the history of the Middle Ages, when the Church handed over to the secular arm the relapsed, recommending that those might be "gently treated" who were to be chained to the stake and burned alive.

Having thus sketched the history of the Con-

fessional, I will now give an outline of the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church regarding it; the mere statement of which, taken from their own authorities, will probably be the best assistance in forming a right conclusion respecting the doctrine of the Church of England on this important subject.

The Roman Catholic Church, ~~then,~~ distinguishes two grades or degrees of penitence; the one perfect, the other imperfect. Perfect penitence they call *contrition*; it consists in hating sin as such, for its own sake, not for the sake of its punishment; in hating it from love of God rather than from fear of hell. Imperfect penitence they distinguish by the name of *attrition*; it consists in hating sin from fear of hell rather than from love of God; in hating it not so much for its own sake as for the sake of its results. Now it is easy to see that the man who shrinks from sinning merely because he fears being punished is no more to be accounted really penitent than he who abstains from theft simply because he fears the gaol is to be accounted honest. Take away, in either case, the fear of consequences, and the man will sin without the least remorse. *Attrition*, therefore, seems not to deserve the name of penitence at all, since there is in it no love of God, no horror

of sin for its own sake; it rests on a purely selfish calculation of consequences, and involves no change of heart.

And this is probably the secret of the ultimate inefficacy of those appeals to one of the baser parts of our nature, the passion of fear, to which revival preachers too frequently confine themselves. They may terrify their hearers for a time; but as soon as the effect of terror has gone off (and it is generally transient), the supposed convert will return to the practices which he had abandoned not from love of God, a motive noble and permanent, but from mere dread of hell, which he will find plenty of persons in these days to sneer out of his convictions.

Distinguishing, then, between contrition and attrition, between perfect and imperfect penitence, or, as I should rather say, between true penitence and that which is in reality no penitence whatever, the Roman Catholic Church declares that, if the sinner has contrition, if he is sorry for his sins because he feels that they are hateful to the God he loves, he is forgiven at once. Before they have been confessed to the priest they have been pardoned by the Deity; in such cases confession is only necessary for the preservation of Church order, and

that a suitable penance may be appointed. But the absolution of the priest has been anticipated by God. So far they speak correctly and teach evangelically. But as no man can be certain that his sorrow has reached the point at which it becomes contrition, and therefore acquires instantaneous forgiveness; as no man can be sure that he hates sin for its own sake as an offence to his loving God and Saviour, and that he would hate it as much even if there was no hell to punish it; therefore, they proceed, Christ has enjoined the Sacrament of Penance, wherein if a man only confesses his sins fully to the priest, even though he has very little sorrow for them, except in so far as he dreads their punishment, the priest's absolution, together with the penance he imposes, added to the imperfect penitence or attrition of the penitent, will obtain from God that pardon which otherwise would only be granted to the really contrite heart. In other words, the Roman Catholic system says, "You need not feel any very great degree of sorrow for your sin, you need not hate sin in itself, you need not hate it because it is hateful to your heavenly Father; there is no absolute need of your endeavouring to purify yourself as He whom you profess to serve is pure:

I will make things easier for you; provided only you do not like hell fire, provided only you shrink from everlasting burnings, you may come to me, and if you will only confess without reserve your wicked acts and words and thoughts, so far as you are able to recollect them, I will absolve you from all your sins, though you have really little or no sorrow for them, and will restore you to the favour of God, though in reality you do not love God, but are only afraid of Him." This is actually the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church as expounded by St. Alphonsus Liguori, who, being a doctor of the Church, has had his works stamped with universal approbation, a Papal rescript declaring in so many words that there is not a single censurable proposition in them, and that they are a perfectly safe guide to confessors and directors. And I confess that of all parts of the Roman Catholic system this appears to me the most dangerous, because it teaches that men can be saved without loving God at all.

I am quite aware that much is said about love to God and Christ, and still more about love to certain of God's creatures, notably the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, who are associated with God and His Christ in the worship of modern Rome. I know

also that various sensuously fantastic forms of devotion, like that of the Sacred Heart, have been recently devised. But it is not less true that love to God, though it is recommended, is not absolutely essential. It is recommended, but it is not required. The Church of Rome has now authoritatively adopted the system for which Pascal denounced the Jesuits two centuries ago; they are strict with the strict and lax with the lax, thus becoming, though not exactly in the Apostle's way, "all things to all men," if by any means they can get them into the Church outside of whose pale there is no salvation, and keep them in it.

But this is not all. The "Sacrament of Penance" has three parts, so far as the acts of the penitent are concerned: contrition or attrition, confession, and satisfaction. Of the two first I have spoken; I now proceed to speak of the third. The "satisfaction" prescribed by the Council of Trent consists in the performance of certain acts enjoined by the priest, partly to testify and cultivate the penitent's sorrow for his sin, partly to satisfy the justice of God. Now this latter motive is founded on what is doubtless true. It is true that when a man has done something amiss, the sorrow he may feel when he

comes to a better mind will not do away with the consequences of his deed, so far as this life is concerned. If he has stolen and is detected, he will be put in prison, and his character will be blasted, no matter how penitent he is, unless, indeed, he has stolen on a gigantic scale. If he has wasted his substance and his health in riotous living, he will not be the less a beggar or an invalid because he regrets his vicious courses. So far as this life is concerned, God punishes even while He pardons. According to the Psalmist's profoundly true expression, He is a "God that forgives the sinner, and yet takes vengeance on his inventions." There is, therefore, a certain amount of truth in the idea that underlies the Roman doctrine of satisfaction. It is in their application of this truth that the error and the mischief dwells. For they apply it, not to the actual punishment in this life of sins and crimes, which is essential to the maintenance of society, but to their supposed punishment in the life to come. The penances or satisfactions they impose on their penitents are not to satisfy God's justice in so far as that justice has been outraged by crimes against society, but are intended to appease God's wrath in the direct relations between the soul and God, in

which regard God's justice has been already satisfied by Christ's atonement. And the result of this false view is doubly mischievous. On the one hand, it makes men think less of Christ's satisfaction for our sins; on the other hand, it destroys or impairs that sense of justice by which true penitence must always be accompanied, and which is the main safeguard of society. I will illustrate by an example what I mean.

We will suppose a man to have committed one of those agrarian murders which have gained Ireland an unenviable notoriety. He goes to confession, and of course confesses the murder amongst his other sins, if indeed he regards it as a sin at all. For in the catechisms and books issued by authority for the instruction of the populace, murder is defined to be "the killing of a man *unjustly*." If, therefore, the criminal persuades himself that in killing his victim he did not act "unjustly," he has literally no sin whatever to confess, according to the teaching of his Church; he need not even mention the deed in the Confessional. Nay, if he has only killed a wrong person by mistake, he has not committed murder according to the modern reigning casuistry; since murder requires intention, and the intention to kill

the person actually killed was wanting. However, I shall suppose he is not quite so hardened as the authorised teaching of his Church would make him; I shall suppose that he does think he has committed a sin in some degree by killing a man, even though he slew him by mistake, or at any rate, according to the agrarian code, did not put him to death "unjustly." He confesses this sin then, and the priest gives him absolution on the condition of his performing some act of penance by way of satisfaction. Now the real case with regard to sins against God, which at the same time are crimes against man, is this: that no person who has thus sinned against God can be pardoned unless he makes all the reparation in his power to man. This is a vital truth, and it is a truth too frequently forgotten. People must not fancy they can really repent of their sin against God and yet contrive to enjoy its advantages, or to escape the penalties affixed to it by man. To use a homely proverb, they cannot "eat their cake and have it." They cannot be really sorry for the sin and yet retain its profits or evade its punishment. In the case I have supposed, therefore, the case of a murderer, there can be no true penitence, and therefore there can be no forgiveness, unless the criminal

makes all the reparation to society he can, and this can only be done by confessing his crime and giving himself up to justice. This is the only reparation he can make, and this reparation he is bound to make. Now does the Romish priest ever tell his penitent *this*? Do you think that, if he did, the detection and punishment of a murder, instead of being the rule, would be the rare exception in Ireland, a country in which for more than fifty years no Protestant has ever been even *suspected* of an agrarian murder? Do you think that if he did, assassination would flourish as it does there, and that the sympathy of the most religious peasantry in Europe would be always given to the assassin, never to the victim? No; the "satisfaction" imposed by the priest, according to the rules of that Church which exercises a power so vast, an influence so pervasive, is not that satisfaction which alone could stamp penitence as real and lend it efficacy; it is not the reparation to society for the crime committed against society, and to punish which the magistrate in Ireland has long borne the sword almost in vain; it is some fantastic observance which is supposed to mitigate the pains of purgatory; perhaps the repetition by the score or the hundred of the Lord's

Prayer and the Ave Maria, thus turning prayer into a punishment; perhaps abstention from meat and eggs, or walking barefoot to chapel, or crawling on bare knees round some consecrated well so many times, or giving money to religious uses. But not in a single instance is it the only "satisfaction" that would avail, the only "satisfaction" which in such a case is aught but mockery! And thus confession, instead of being the medicine, becomes the poison of the soul, because it makes men easy under the most tremendous crimes!

But besides the great mischiefs which inhere in the modern Romish doctrine and practice with regard to the "Sacrament of Penance," there are others, and hardly inferior ones, which flow from the practice of compulsory or habitual confession in itself. As every confession made to man must turn upon the single acts, and cannot well deal with the sinful principles or motives, its tendency is to disguise from the sinner that wherein his sinfulness really consists; to make him regard it as a mere set of external acts instead of a deep inward habit or disease; and, accordingly, we find that habitual confession is recommended on the score of its purifying properties; the penitent is quite clean and

pure after confessing and being absolved; his soul, to use an expression in their books, is made bright and beautiful like an angel of God as soon as the great words "I absolve thee" have been pronounced.

Again, the effort to recall every sinful act that has taken place since the last previous confession (and this is inculcated on all who practise habitual confession, because a knowingly imperfect confession is worse than none at all), besides being likely to produce a mechanical and most defective idea of sin, tends to make the penitent dwell on his individual sinful acts far more than is good for his soul's health. And not merely must *this* be done. The penitent must state every circumstance which can modify his guilt, in order to the due apportionment of penance; with the inevitable result that the polluting or alluring details still more befoul his imagination, and not only his, but the imagination of his confessor also. This is a matter to which I can only allude, but it is of deadly moment. Again, the consequence of habitual confession, extending to the utmost minutiæ, must be that the clergy who conduct it acquire a knowledge of the secrets of their penitents, the possession of which

must be as dangerous to themselves as it is degrading to their flock. Such knowledge is too high for man; it exalts him into the place of God; and, accordingly, the doctrine and practice of the Confessional, where it is fully organised, trenches on blasphemy, inasmuch as it is expressly laid down that what the priest has heard in confession he knows not as man, but as God; the conclusion being that as man he may deny and ought to deny, even with an oath, all knowledge of what he has thus heard. This doctrine, which is formulated in so many words in the Latin Church, is the necessary result of enforced confession; and on the logical principle that premisses leading to false conclusions must be false themselves, we are authorised to conclude that the whole system of enforced confession is necessarily wrong, since it necessarily leads to such monstrous results.

On the ruinous effects of habitual confession on the character I need not enlarge. The man who never acts for himself, but puts his conscience into the keeping of a priest,—and habitual confession tends, at least, to this,—abdicates his mental and moral dignity, and dwindles into a poor feeble creature, the mere echo or organ of his confessor. And

in how many instances has not the director's imperious advice overruled the better suggestions of conscience and made men adopt courses from which, if left to themselves, they would have shrunk! It is a Roman Catholic writer, the Duke of St. Simon, who narrates the scene when Louis XIV upon his death-bed summoned to his side the cardinals and directors who had guided him, and told them solemnly, as in the presence of the God before whom he was soon to stand, stripped of his power and state, that he washed his hands of all responsibility for the persecutions to which they had incited him! Alas! it was then too late to undo what had been done; nor could such plea of irresponsibility be accepted, for "no man can in any wise answer for his brother." We cannot divest ourselves of our individual responsibility. We are responsible for the very act by which we endeavour to abdicate responsibility, and, of course, for all the consequences of such act. We must stand each by himself, each for himself, in awful loneliness before the bar of God!

The history of the Confessional down to its modern full-blown development is, in itself, I con-

ceive, a proof that our Reformers never could have intended to sanction its retention. And this even in spite of the use of the words in the act of ordaining priests, "Whose sins thou dost remit, they are remitted; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." For if those words are taken as referring to private confession and absolution, they would, by their prominent position in the very act of ordination, intimate that hearing private confessions and granting absolution was actually the chief function of the second order in the ministry; and this would be incompatible with the circumstance that private confession is nowhere prescribed in our Prayer-book, and is only recommended in two definite cases. The first of these cases is, when men have scruples about receiving the holy communion which they cannot solve without assistance. The second is, when, on a sick-bed, they feel their conscience troubled with some weighty matter, some grievous sin or crime. In these two cases, when the mind, tossed by anxiety and doubt, or tortured with the consciousness of secret guilt, cannot realise its right to the highest Christian privilege, or feels that it has forfeited all right thereto,—in these two cases, and *in these alone*, does our Church exhort the

penitent to open his grief, or even to make a special confession of his sins to his minister, in order that, in the former case, he may receive the benefit of absolution, not by the pronouncement of a certain form, for which there is no provision, but by the ministration of God's holy Word ; in other words, that he may receive the assurance of the divine forgiveness, through the application to his individual case, of the general promises of the Word of God, made by one who is learned therein, and qualified by his office to expound it with authority ; or, in the other case, that he may be restored by the minister, speaking and acting in the Church's name, to that fellowship and communion with the faithful which his secret guilt had virtually forfeited. But no form of absolution is provided in the first of these two cases, apparently because none is wanted ; and in the second case, the context in which stands the absolution in the visitation office proves that it was intended, not to convey a pardon from God which, without it, would not be granted, but to assure the sick man of God's pardon, and to convey to him his full restoration to all Church privileges. And, accordingly, the original form of this absolution in the Sarum Liturgy contained the words, "And I

restore thee to the Sacraments of the Church." But even in this latter case confession, though recommended, is not enjoined; the sick person is not *required* to make it, nor is he ever to be *solicited* to make it, unless he feels his conscience specially troubled; and even then the absolution is only to be pronounced "if he humbly and heartily desire it," thereby showing to the minister that he is in a fit state to receive it. On the whole we are thus led to suppose that the Reformers, in constructing their ordination service, had in view the sense in which our Saviour's words were used, and still are used, in the ancient Latin office for consecrating bishops, much more than the sense into which the recent appendix to the Latin office has diverted them, I mean the conferring of a certain power on priests. And with this view concurred, in all probability, ignorance on their part of the recency of that appendix. For when we find Bishop Andrewes, in the generation that followed the Reformers, so ignorant of the ancient ordination offices as actually to say that unless the Roman Church had *retained* those words in the office for ordaining priests, it is likely they would have had no priests at all,—when we find the most learned bishop in a learned age thus betraying com-

plete ignorance of the facts that the Latin Church had only used these words for three centuries in the office for ordaining priests, and that the Greek Church had never used them in ordaining ministers at all, it is not uncharitable to think that the compilers of our Prayer-book may have known no better. Ancient service-books were sought up at the Reformation not to be examined but to be burned, the Vandalism of the Reformers thus depriving them of the knowledge that would have been most useful to them; and whilst the attention, especially of Cranmer, was keenly directed to the writings of the Fathers on the Eucharist, neither he nor any of his coadjutors betrays any research into the ancient Pontificals. They may very probably have fancied, as Andrewes did, that the validity of their orders would be imperilled if the words of Christ, which they had always associated with the priesthood, were omitted; and as they had abandoned the ceremony of delivering the Eucharistic vessels, by which Pope Eugenius the Fourth, in his ignorance of ancient rites, had instructed the Armenians that the priesthood is conferred, they might dread going too far, should they expunge the words of the Saviour also.

From the wearisome details of abuses with which ecclesiasticism has overlaid the simple teaching of the Bible on the subject of the sinner's approach to God, let me in conclusion, for a very few moments, turn to the more edifying consideration of that subject in its purity.

To all who are bent on drawing nigh to God, to all who sincerely desire forgiveness for the past and strength to amend in future, I can conceive no greater privilege than the privilege of confessing their sins to God Himself, without the impertinent interference of a merely human intermediary. How often do we find it impossible to represent our feelings by the means of speech to our fellow-men? What boy, what youth has not, at some time or other, felt as if he would give worlds if he could only make himself understood exactly? Who has not on some occasion or other looked his fellow-mortal in the face almost despairingly, conscious that he was quite unable to convey to him his real thought, the depth and sincerity of his emotion? Does not every person who has ever attempted to turn his mind upon itself know that he cannot, even to himself, even in thought, much less in speech, present a faithful picture of his own feelings, because no one really quite knows him-

self, because the γνῶθι σεαυτὸν of the Greek moralist is an impracticable maxim? Here, then, comes in the strong consolation of the immediacy of our relations with our heavenly Father. In Him we approach one to whom all hearts are open, all desires known. One who cannot misunderstand, and will not undervalue the real strength and pressure of our feelings; who not merely knows in all points how we are tempted, but also how temptation acts on the individual personality of each; who can estimate and allow for peculiarities of character and constitution which no fellow-mortal can appreciate. The inarticulate cries of the human spirit, echoed in their inarticulateness by the Spirit of God, according to St. Paul, which, dwelling within every Christian, shares, if we may venture so to speak, his weakness and incapacity of utterance; those moods and feelings to which language is altogether inadequate, are perfectly understood by God. The Omniscient we may address without a word, without the slightest fear of misconception. The circumstances which man cannot or will not take into account, will all be taken into account by Him; not a pang, not a tear, not an aspiration after goodness, not a regret for falling short of it, but is known, and will be recorded by

Him with whom we have to do. It is the insincere and half-hearted, who wish to make the best of both worlds, to live the life of the sinner and die the death of the righteous,—it is these, and these alone, who have reason to quail before Him in whom, little as they realise it, they live and move and have their being. Such persons may go to a confessor or director before whom they can dissemble their true self, and who may be cheated into granting an invalid absolution. But those who are thoroughly in earnest, whose flesh and heart fail in their longing for better things,—to such the assurance of their being thoroughly known, comprehended by their Father through all the intricacies of their nature, must be the most unutterable comfort. And feeling that they are thus known to Him, they can take with dignified equanimity whether the approbation or the disapprobation of their fellow-men, even in the bitterest disappointment, the cruellest misjudgment, only thrown back more completely into the embrace of God.

XIII

DISHEARTENMENT

Whilst the bridegroom tarried, they all *slumbered and slept.*—MATT. xxv. 5.

THE most unobservant reader can hardly fail to notice how often our Saviour borrows imagery from the festivities of marriage to illustrate the joys of the kingdom of heaven, as though to refute by anticipation the slur cast on wedlock by the subsequent development of heresy in the Catholic Church. The parable of the ten virgins, of which my text forms an important part, is distinguished from all others in which this illustration is employed, by its dwelling exclusively on the previous behaviour of those who expect to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. In order fully to understand it, the usages to which it alludes, on which, indeed, it is based, must be explained ; which is the more

easy to do because in the unchanging East they are still pretty nearly the same now as they were eighteen hundred years ago, when this parable was uttered.

Attended by a troop of his most intimate acquaintances (those called in the Gospels the sons of the bride-chamber), the bridegroom goes forth in the evening to fetch home his bride from her father's house. The company, numerous and splendid in proportion to the wealth and respectability of the parties, moves on to the sound of cheerful music. The marriage ceremony takes place on their arrival at the house of the bride's father; and then the company, augmented by the female friends of the bride, lead her in procession to that house which is henceforth to be her home. Each person in the procession bears aloft a blazing torch; and as they move onward their numbers are continually swelled by such as could not assemble previously, and who are waiting here and there in expectation. Of course it is difficult, in a ceremony of this nature, to calculate the exact moment when the procession will be likely to pass each meeting-place; inevitable delays often cause the bridegroom to tarry for hours beyond the time intended. "At length," says a traveller, describing a scene of this kind which he

actually viewed in India,—"at length, after waiting two or three hours, *near midnight* it was announced in the very words of Scripture, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him.' All the persons who were to take part in the procession now lighted their torches, and ran with them in their hands to take their place; some of them had left their lights and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward." Those who are qualified by their equipments enter the bridegroom's house, the door is shut and the feast begins; and no attention can now be paid to the clamours for admission raised, whether by the rabble of the streets or by those invited guests who, having failed in the respect due to the married pair, can have no claim upon their welcome.

Such is the simple and intelligible scenery of the parable: let us now endeavour to ascertain its meaning.

The bridegroom is obviously, here as elsewhere, the Lamb of God; the Son of man and the Son of God; the Heir of the great King whom the universe obeys. The bride is kept altogether in the background; not without deep meaning, for as she represents the Church, she evidently in this parable

coincides with some of the characters illustrated therein. The same is the case also in the parable of the marriage of the king's son: the guests at his wedding-feast are themselves his bride; and this explains why in both these parables the bride is never mentioned. She appears, indeed, but not in her perfect form; only in her inception.

The ten virgins belong to the class of those who wait in some convenient spot by which the procession is to pass in order to fall into their places; they do not compose the whole of the train who ultimately enter the house and sit down at the feast. Now this appears to me to be exceedingly significant; may it not fairly indicate that they represent that portion of the Church which shall *last* join, and shall finally complete its numbers? If this be the case, then the description of their number and their conduct must be taken as a prophetic indication of the state of the Church of Christ on earth at the very time of His return.

Their *number* is the first circumstance of significance. *Ten* was the smallest number of Israelites which could constitute a legitimate synagogue. That the Church at the time of Christ's return should be represented by only *ten* virgins seems, then, to indi-

cate that it shall be reduced to the lowest state, considering the vast extent of the globe and its population, consistent with the maintenance of Christianity as a visible and appreciable influence in the world. Five of them were wise and five were foolish. Why their whole number should be thus equally divided does not so readily appear. Perhaps it is intended rather to indicate the contrast of wisdom and folly most clearly and emphatically, than to give an accurate statement of the proportions they shall hold towards each other. They had all brought lamps with them, and these lamps were all alight at first. So far there was no difference; but the wise had made provision against the delay which might take place, whilst the foolish had neglected this precaution; the wise had brought oil in their vessels along with their lamps; the foolish had brought neither additional oil nor, it would seem, vessels to put it in. And, as the parable hinges on this circumstance, let us inquire what is the meaning of the burning lamps and of the oil by which their flame is fed.

Light is everywhere in Scripture the emblem of purity, of truth, and of knowledge. *Fire* is the

emblem of zeal, of love, and of devotion. God Himself is described to us as light, in which is no darkness at all. The second of the triple benedictions by which the High Priest put the name of Jehovah on his people is, "The Lord make his face to lighten on thee, and be gracious unto thee." Christ is the effulgence of the glory of Him whom no mortal hath seen or can see, who dwelleth in light unapproachable. And the condemnation is that when this Light came into the world, and shined in the darkness which could not comprehend it, men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. In the blazing lamps, therefore, we see at the same time the illumination and the ardour and devotion of the Christian temperament.

Oil, too, is everywhere significant in Holy Writ. The oil with which the Jewish High Priest was anointed, with which the King of Israel was consecrated, symbolised that Holy Spirit which was bestowed measureless on Christ, the great High Priest of an eternal covenant, the King whose kingdom hath no end. The official title, even of the Redeemer, is the Messiah or Christ, *i.e.* the Anointed One. We therefore behold in the lighted lamps and the oil which is to feed them emblems the most

appropriate of that knowledge and love of God which are as inseparable from each other as fire and light; of those influences of the Spirit which can alone maintain that sacred flame. And here comes in one of the important lessons yielded by the parable. The *foolish* virgins as well as the wise had their lighted lamps and a certain quantity of oil within them; but they had made no additional provision of oil in case of a more than usual delay. Now, taking that view of the parable which, as you have seen, appears to be demanded by its scenery and circumstances, understanding the ten virgins to symbolise the professing Church of Christ at the time immediately before His second Advent, though without at all narrowing that time unduly so as to make it disproportionate to the vast space which has been, and the still vaster space which may be interjected between the first and second comings,—the coming of the Saviour and the coming of the Judge,—taking the ten virgins as representing the Church in the closing days of the present dispensation, what may we gather from this description, coupled as it is with the further statement that, whilst the bridegroom tarried, they *all*, wise as well as foolish, slumbered and slept?

I think it is difficult to read the New Testament attentively without being struck with the difference between the feelings of the first Christians and our own regarding the second coming of our Lord. We hardly ever look forward to it, I fancy; with the exception of a few enthusiasts, death seems to be our horizon. The first Christians, on the other hand, appear to have thought very little about death. All such considerations were absorbed in the expectation of that great event which to us has all but vanished. So startling is the contrast between them and us in this respect, that we are tempted to think that even the apostles must have misjudged the long vista of the future, and failed to recognise the distance of its perspective; though, when brought face to face with the exaggerated and breathless expectations of his Thessalonian converts, St. Paul reminds them of the stupendous developments of wickedness he had taught them must precede the second Advent, developments which would surely require no little time to grow and ripen; while the author of the Second Epistle commonly attributed to St. Peter, expressly tells the believers that so long would be the delay that scoffers would challenge the promise of Christ's

second coming on the very ground of the long-continued sameness of everyday existence. The apostles therefore could hardly entertain such expectations of an almost immediate Advent, and yet, strange and inconsistent as it seems, all their aspirations, all their warnings are directed to that day and founded on it. When we should exhort men by the near approach of death, they exhort them by the near approach of judgment. When we should cheer the sincere but flagging Christian with the thought of his departing hence to Christ, they cheer him with the thought of Christ's returning hither. In no respect is the habitual tone of exhortation in the New Testament more singularly contrasted with that which prevails amongst ourselves than in this particular. For whom is the crown prepared? For all them that love the Lord's appearing. When will our adoption be complete? When Christ shall descend with the shout of victory, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and we, whoever of us are alive and remain, shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so shall be ever at home with the Lord.

Here, then, is an attitude of mind we, with our habits of thought and feeling, are constrained to call

paradoxical. A deliberate conviction that thousands of years may very possibly elapse in the slow ripening of the counsels of Him with whom a thousand years are but as a day; and yet an ardent expectation of an event which must take place at some future time, though when it will take place none can tell. A realisation of this event so intense as to throw all the intervening time, be it long or short, completely into the background. The Church *then* was the ten virgins *before* they all slumbered and slept, before the long delay had dulled their first eager and vivid anticipations. The Church *now*, what is she? Is she not the same virgins all alike, wise as well as foolish, buried in the gradually deepening sleep of fatigued and disappointed expectation? And taken thus, is not that very contrast to which I have adverted between the habits of thought displayed by the New Testament and those of our own day, is not this very contrast *a proof of the truth of this parable, and of the divine prescience of Him who spake it?*

God, my brethren, is more merciful to us than our theories and systems are. He does not tax us beyond our powers. He does not "demand day labour, light denied." He knoweth our frame; He

remembereth that we are but dust. The weariness of the overworked body, the strain of the overwrought mind, the exhaustion of long baffled expectation sinks at length into a foretold—a not forbidden—slumber. The present and perhaps still more the future attitude of the Church as regards Christ's second coming is due to infirmity much more than to iniquity. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Once the disciples in the garden of agony slept for sorrow. The Church now sleeps from hope deferred. So far as her Master's second Advent is concerned, there is hardly a symptom any longer of either wish or expectation. The hymns in which we chant it are unreal to us. They do not express our actual feelings. The references to it in our services produce no answering thrill. This state is one which preachers in general seem afraid to notice, but it is symptomatic and important. And I wish to call your special attention to it as being predicted in this parable, and therefore as being another proof of the certainty of that very event to which it has dulled us. But even in this slumber of exhaustion and discouragement there is still a difference between different members of the Church. Some there are who, even in spite of it,

have made provision for that future event which has almost passed out of their recollection. The wise virgins slumbered and slept, but they had taken oil in their vessels with their lamps. It is possible with the Psalmist to say, "Mine eyes fail for longing;" to say, "How long, O Lord? for ever?" to be almost without hope, as most Christians in this age, so far as my experience reaches, seem to be; and yet to have made due provision for the maintenance of the sacred fire by continually, even in the darkest and most slumberous night of half despair, invoking God as David did: "Cast me not out of thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." It is possible to maintain the spark of divine life and love by the constant, quiet, prayerful, unpretending discharge of daily duties, even though these duties be discharged not in the cheering and invigorating light of day, but in the gloom and dispiritment of the fast falling night, in which each sound is more and more hushed, each spiritual voice more and more faintly heard. "I sleep but my soul waketh" may be the motto of such persons in whom conscience takes the place of expectation, and who are sustained not so much by the animating promises of the Gospel as by its elevating principles.

Yet this state is not merely a state of discouragement. It is a state of danger. Had the virgins not *all* slumbered and slept, the foolish might have perceived their lack of oil before it was too late. But as they never woke until they were startled by the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him," so they knew not how far they had degenerated in the graces and in the life of the Spirit till they felt, at the critical moment when faith was to be turned into sight, that their lamps were going out, their faith, their love, their zeal expiring for want of that aliment of spiritual aid which they had neglected to invoke.

The parable has thus two distinct aspects; one of warning, the other of encouragement. It cannot, methinks, but encourage us, in the evil days on which we have fallen, to find the very drawbacks under which we labour described and predicted long before; to see that the Lord, who so long delays His coming, has taken into merciful account the effect which that delay must have even on the wise virgins, even on His sincere and earnest disciples. All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and this thought is as full of comfort to the sincere though

feeble Christian as it is of terror to the false believer. The mind of man is to a very considerable extent the creature of the age in which he lives; only to the highest is it given to outstrip that age; to none to be entirely beyond its influence. If, then, we feel some of that discouragement of which I have been speaking weigh heavily upon ourselves; if the distant perspective of future facts seems lost in baffling gloom; if no sound of the expected coming falls on the straining ear; if the overflowings of ungodliness we see around us in open denial or secret questioning make us afraid; if at times we feel as though the very foundations of the great deep had broken up, and sure footing were lost in things pertaining to eternity,—in all these states of sometimes, with more firmly constituted minds, almost paralysing perplexity, let us remember who it was that said, "While the bridegroom tarried, they *all* slumbered and slept;" and let us take heart, as knowing that the sleep of exhaustion, of discouragement, of miserable uncertainty, is yet not the sleep of death, provided only the conscience has been kept tender, and the flame of love has never been suffered to expire. If the Psalmist could say that when he contemplated the prosperity of the ungodly

his steps had wellnigh slipped, if he felt the moral difficulties of God's providential government with such overpowering strength that his faith nearly sank under them, we need not be ashamed if, when to moral are superadded intellectual difficulties, a like effect is sometimes produced upon ourselves ; and we may assuredly be comforted by the thought that all our difficulties and perplexities will ultimately be cleared up, provided we are sincere in the pursuit of truth, and in the practice of righteousness. For "he that willeth to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Many things seem to indicate that a period of great tribulation, intellectual and spiritual, is coming on the world,—a period of tribulation of such stress and agony that the faith, even of the elect, shall almost fail. Such dangers are not to be met by ignorantly denouncing them, and by cursing those who succumb beneath them. There is a woe pronounced on those who make the heart of the righteous sad, when God had not bade them do so ; it may be as mischievous in some cases to speak nothing but menace and denunciation as in other cases to speak nothing but peace and safety. The

true tone is struck by the Prophet when he says, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" a text which may safely be inverted, and taken to imply, "There is no condemnation to the righteous." And in the eyes of God righteousness consists not so much in accuracy of belief as in sincerity of purpose. It is to the pure in heart that Christ promises that they shall see God. Yea, though they be weary and heavy-laden, not merely with the burden of sin, but with the burden of doubt, let them but come to Christ, and He will give them rest. In this very parable He shows how thoroughly He can appreciate the case of such; nay, more, He shows that their case has been long before provided for, that it has long before entered into His vast and inscrutable plan of government; that plan by which not merely the wrath of the wicked, but the slumberous discouragement of the good is made to serve ends which we know not fully now, but shall, perhaps, know hereafter.

One end of it we do, indeed, already know. It is *the trial of our faith.* That trial, St. Peter declares, is far more precious than gold, though tried by fire. The soul itself is raised and purified by the very things which seem at the time to depress

and even to contaminate it. Its wrestling with doubts and discouragements; its almost stifled and inarticulate cries for help and mercy; its struggling feebly onwards in spite of temptations, to which the fiery trials of the first Christians are little comparable,—all these things, most distressing at the time, are educating it for something higher. The man would often be glad to keep the simplicity of the child, but he cannot; he must put away childish things, and he becomes more useful though less happy. Just so the Church, as she advances onwards to her term of earthly existence, is continually advancing in various knowledge; each age has something unknown to former ages; but increase of knowledge is but increase of sorrow and of temptation. The golden age of simplicity is gone, and the iron age of research and discovery and criticism is distracting, dividing, and fatiguing us.

But whilst the parable gives needful encouragement to the sincere and earnest, it offers an awful warning to the careless. The foolish virgins were not more blamable than the wise for slumbering and sleeping; for yielding to that weakness of the flesh which so often accompanies the overwrought spirit. But they had made no provision of oil, and

therefore, when they were roused by the proclamation of that event of which oblivion for a time had served on all alike, they were utterly unprepared to welcome it. Their lamps were going out for want of oil, and it was then too late to replenish them. Each individual is a microcosm; each Christian represents some phase of the experience of the Church at large. The special dangers of the last portion of the Church's earthly life are reflected in the dangers of the last part of each Christian's life. Early zeal, early piety, how often does it not tone down as life advances into carelessness, undevotion, positive irreverence! And then when the summons comes, which in one shape or other must come to all, they find that they are unprepared. There is no power even to implore the renewal of the grace that has been lost. Neither can their fellows aid them, for in what concerns the soul there is no vicarious piety; nor can any one transfuse into another his own graces and convictions. No man can by any means redeem his brother. Each must be convinced for himself. Each must be converted for himself. Each must love for himself. The Church may accompany us with her prayers to the dread threshold, but she cannot cross it. In that moment

we are face to face and alone with God. We seldom feel this now, but there must come a time when we shall all experience it; when we shall each of us either trim his lamp to a brighter flame as he steps into the unutterable joy, or see it expire and leave him in that outer darkness which no ray of certain hope can penetrate.

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NOTE TO SERMON XII

BISHOP ANDREWES ON THE FORM OF ORDINATION

The following extract is taken from a volume containing ninety-six "Sermons by the Right Honourable and Right Reverend Father in God, Launcelot Andrewes, late Lord Bishop of Winchester, London, 1661." The sermon from which it is extracted was "preached before the King's Majesty at Greenwich on 20th May 1616 A.D., being Whitsunday."

"Now what is here to do, what business is in hand, we cannot but know, if ever we have been at the giving of *Holy orders*. For, by these words are they given, '*Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins ye remit*,' etc. Were, to them, and are to us, even to this day, by these and by no other words. Which words, had not the Church of Rome retained for their *ordinations*, it might well have been doubted (for all their *accipe potestatem sacrificandi pro vivis et mortuis*), whether they had any Priests at all, or no. But, as God would, they retained them, and so saved themselves. For, these are the very *operative* words, for the *conferring* this power, for the performing of this act." (The punctuation and italics are exactly reproduced.)

Bishop Andrewes plainly intimates that priests' orders

conferred without these words would be probably invalid, and that God's providence induced the Romish Church to "*retain*" them.

Now this he could not have thought had he known that these words have never been used at all in the Greek Church for the purpose of conferring orders, and that in the Latin Church they were not "*retained*," but *introduced* for the first time about the thirteenth century.

If Bishop Andrewes, the most learned prelate of a learned age, knew so little about the matter, it is very unlikely that our Reformers, half a century before him, with fewer aids and much less leisure, were better instructed. They probably fancied, as Andrewes did, that the words had always been used, and were vital to ordination.

I had at one time intended to add more extensive notes on the twelfth Sermon, but have been prevented from doing so by ill-health and want of leisure.

Should any of my readers, however, wish to pursue the subject for himself, I will indicate the important work of Jean Morin, *Commentarius de Sacris Ecclesiae Ordinationibus*; Edmund Martene's work, *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus*; the Greek Euchologion now in use, my copy of which bears date 1877, and is printed at Venice; and the Roman Pontifical now used, my copy of which bears date 1844, and is also printed at Venice.

A most useful text-book on the whole subject of Confession and Absolution is *The Penitential Discipline of the Early Church*, by Nathanael Marshall, D.D. (reprinted in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Oxford, 1844).

Any one who wishes to acquire an adequate idea of

modern Roman Catholic teaching and practice on the subject will do well to consult Father Gury's books: *Compendium Theologiae Moralis*, and *Casus Conscientiae*. They interlock, and form one complete work. They are the more important, because they are text-books at Maynooth. They contain the last refinements of the current casuistry.

In their bearing on the family and the state, on domestic, social, and political morality, they have been analysed with perfect fairness by the late French statesman Paul Bert in his important work entitled *La Morale des Jésuites*. It is not a book to be left on a drawing-room table, nor could it be indeed translated: the secrets of the modern Confessional are not for the eyes of the English public. But heads of families who are responsible for the conduct and happiness of their wives and children might profitably spend some little time in examining for themselves the principles on which the Confessional is now worked. They will perhaps be surprised to learn that every abuse which Pascal exposed and branded with infamy, the whole system of probabilism included, according to which a man is allowed to adopt a course contrary to his own conscience provided only he can find some "weighty" authority in its favour, is now sanctioned by an author who rules the Confessional in France, in Ireland, presumably in England also.

Of the decisions arrived at by Gury, and authoritatively promulgated by the schools of theology which adopt him as a text-book, I will give a single sample.[1] Gury supposes three persons, who for brevity I shall call A, B, and C. A has a violent animosity against B, and endeavours to kill

[1] Gury, *Casus Conscientiae de Actibus Humanis: casus sextus.*

him, but by misadventure, in spite of reasonable precautions, he kills C. Two questions are propounded: first, Is A guilty of murdering C? second, Is A bound to make any reparation to the family of C for the injury he has done them? Both questions are answered in the negative. A has not murdered C, because he did not intend to kill him, intention being essential to constitute murder. Of course, as A did not murder C, he is not bound to make any reparation to C's family. The former of these decisions exempts from the category of murder every outrage involving loss of life in which the individual killed was not the person intended to be killed. Cases of this kind are constantly taking place in Ireland, as every one knows, but in not one of these cases is the man who has fired the shot which has deprived a fellow-creature of life, and which was intended to deprive a fellow-creature of life, a murderer, simply because his intended was not his actual victim! And in such cases an ecclesiastic saturated with Gury's theology may calmly and without violating truth inform the world that to his knowledge the man tried and found guilty of the crime on the clearest evidence is innocent.

THE END

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Reichel, Charles Parsons, Bp. of Meath, 1816-1894.

Cathedral and university sermons / by Charle Parsons Reichel. -- London ; New York : Macmil 1891.

vi, 325p. ; 20cm.

13 sermons.

1. Church of Ireland--Sermons. 2. Universit and colleges--Sermons. I. Title.

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